

29.3 Summer 2011

PRACTICE

A Conversation
with Liz Dunn
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BOOK REVIEW

Two Books on
Louis Kahn
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END NOTE

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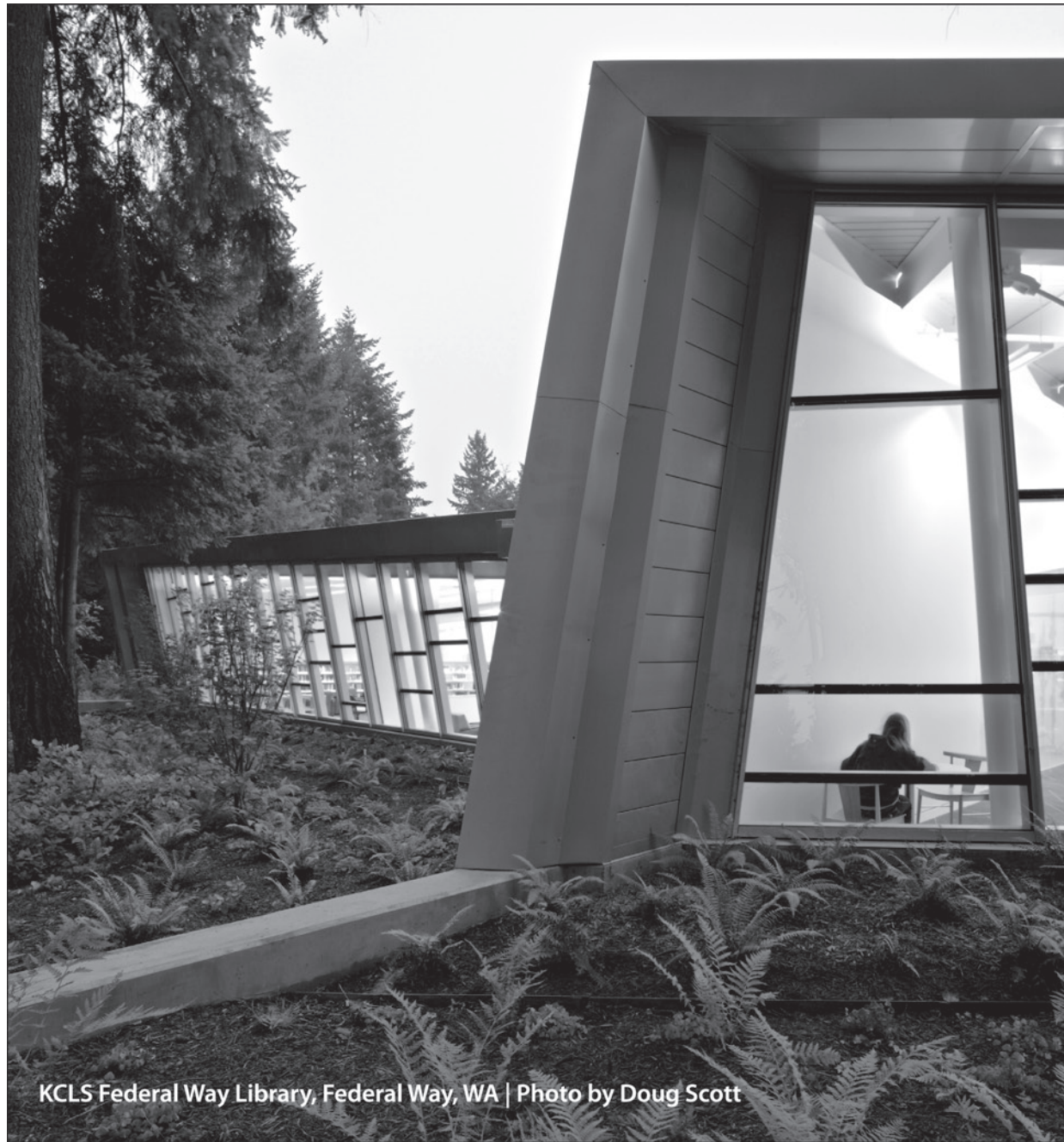
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A Lantern in the Forest

Carefully situated within a stand of mature evergreens, the Federal Way Library renovation and expansion ties the existing library to its surroundings. Mithun's design team drew upon principles of transparency, daylighting and connection in order to visually open the building to the outdoors while enhancing the functionality of the spaces inside.



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See or Skip?

SUMMER BLOCKBUSTERS

Carolyn Schuetz

Moviegoer Demographics

10% 10% 47% 32%

Occasional (< once a month)
Frequent (> once a month)
Infrequent (once a year)
Non-moviegoers

From Rotten Tomatoes' Top Critics:

- "This is a rich, complex, visually thrilling piece of pop entertainment, as strong as any superhero epic we've ever seen."
- "Is it the worst movie of the summer? Possibly. Will everybody see it? Probably."
- "I was never a fan of the first two, but those are masterpieces compared to this clunk 'o' junk."
- "Every now and then, a film comes along that both defies and compels description."

The Missed Opportunity
LOW REVENUE, HIGH RATING

The Golden Child
HIGH REVENUE, HIGH RATING

THE WASTE OF TIME
LOW REVENUE, LOW RATING

THE AWKWARD CREDITS
HIGH REVENUE, LOW RATING

LOW RATING
HIGH RATING

LOW REVENUE
HIGH REVENUE

Data separated by median values

SOURCES:
www.the-numbers.com
www.rottentomatoes.com

The Quirkiness of the Washington Shoe Building

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner



TOP: Washington Shoe Building, 2011. Photo: © Michael Burns, Seattle
BOTTOM: Boone & Willcox, J.M. Frink Building / Washington Iron Works Building / Washington Shoe Building, 1891–92. Photo: Asahel Curtis, Special Collections Division, University of Washington Libraries

match, within a few years, the building soon presented a unified appearance—and it continued to do so for more than 80 years thereafter!

Today, in the right light, especially when the afternoon sun falls on the west side of the building, the color variance is quite apparent. The difference may be a mystery to most observers—just part of the quirkiness that defines Pioneer Square.

JEFFREY KARLOCHSNER, FAIA, is a professor of Architecture at the University of Washington. He is the author of *Lionel H. Pries, Architect, Artist, Educator: From Arts and Crafts to Modern Architecture* (2007). His new book about the UW Department of Architecture furniture studios will be published in late 2011 or early 2012.

As architects, we like to think of buildings as essentially stable—once completed to our design, we expect them to remain unchanged works of art. Yet I was reminded recently by a comment from one of my students just how often buildings are changed.

I was taking students in my “Seattle Architecture” class on a walking tour in Pioneer Square and the lower part of downtown, when one of the students remarked, “It’s a historic district, so I thought all the buildings would be like they were originally, but instead, almost every building has been altered!” The student was right, of course. Making Pioneer Square a historic district in 1970 protected the buildings from demolition; however, most of these buildings reveal an evolution over the previous 80 years, and many show alterations during the past 40 years, as they have been adaptively reused.

One example is the two-tone building at the southeast corner of S. Jackson Street and Occidental Avenue S.—the building now known as the Washington Shoe Building. The brick of the lower four floors is an orangey red, while the upper two floors are maroon. The combination seems quite unusual—why would anyone make such an odd choice?

In fact, it wasn’t always this way. Before the exterior was cleaned in 2000, the building appeared monochromatic. Only with the cleaning did the color difference appear. The explanation is found in its history.

The original building was a project of John M. Frink, who, by the early 1880s, was a partner in a foundry and machine shop located at Jackson and what is now Occidental. That facility was destroyed by the 1889 fire and reconstructed at another location. During 1891–92, Frink went forward with the construction of a four-story wholesale warehouse on the vacant site. Designed by architects Boone & Willcox, the building featured load-bearing exterior masonry (brick trimmed with stone) and a heavy-timber interior frame typical of post-fire construction.

By 1901, the primary occupant of the structure was the Washington Shoe Company—they would remain as tenants for eight decades. The company name was painted on the north and west façades,

above the third-floor windows, and the building came to be called the Washington Shoe Building. It retained the name even after it was acquired by Sam Israel in the mid-1940s.

Fortuitously located, the building was expanded upward with two additional floors in 1912. Although similar to the original, the brick walls and arched window openings by Blackwell & Baker were more restrained than those of the lower floors. By 1936, with the building no longer used for manufacturing, the storefronts facing the streets were “modernized” with the addition of Art Deco stone facings and black tiles.

In the late 1990s, the building owners, the Samis Land Company, commissioned architects Ron Wright & Associates to update the building, with parking in the basement, retail uses on the first floor and office tenants above, while restoring the exterior in accordance to the guidelines of the Pioneer Square Historic District. The interior was completely upgraded with new systems as well as seismic bracing designed by structural engineers Coughlin Porter Lundeen. In fact, Ron Wright recalls that they had just finished securing the new steel moment frame in place on February 28, 2001—the day of the Nisqually Earthquake!

Puget Sound Masonry was entrusted with the restoration of the exterior. The signage was protected, but otherwise the brick was cleaned. When the cleaning began, it was a complete surprise to everyone that what had appeared to be monochromatic brick turned out to include two colors beneath the years of accumulated grime.

We can only speculate about what must have happened. In 1912, when Blackwell & Baker designed the addition, the 1892 building must already have been severely discolored. That was a time when coal was commonly used for heating, and the building was adjacent to the rail yards with dozens of coal-burning steam engines passing by daily. Rather than matching the original, the architects and owners chose a brick closer to the color in 1912. Even if the color was not quite a perfect

The building appeared monochromatic.

Only with the cleaning did the color difference appear.

Charles Mudede

The Boxy Gehry

What Architecture Cannot Do

Architecture cannot save classical music. Architecture can only do so much. It is not the hospital for the arts. When something is dead or dying, architecture cannot revive it with flamboyance, much fanfare and fashionable designs. Flares and curves over something that is no more are nothing more than flares and curves.

Classical music is something that stopped growing a long time ago; it’s nothing but music made with old technologies that take too long to learn. A classically trained musician is out of time. It’s far too costly to devote an entire period of one’s development to one thing, one instrument. In Bach’s time, this made sense because a piano is a mentally and physically demanding technology. These days, we can make great music with far less training and sweat. When an art is dying, the only thing architecture can do for it is institutionalize it.

Indeed, this is what happened to jazz at New York’s Lincoln Center. The completion of the Rafael Viñoly-designed Frederick P. Rose Hall in 2004 marked the final entombment of the art, which also uses old technologies in the production of its music. Jazz has been dying since the late 1960s, when it was first replaced by younger and less technically demanding forms of music. At the peak of modern jazz, no work of architecture was devoted to it, facilitated its growth or reflected its vitality. (Incidentally, when the Swiss architect Le Corbusier first saw New York City in 1945 from an approaching commercial liner, he exclaimed: “It is hot—jazz in stone!”)

This, however, doesn’t mean that classical music has no place in the world of digitally produced and circulated music. Classical music and jazz are not only great sources for sampling but also offer access to a structure of feeling that was shaped by social and technological environments that are radically different from our own. Also, works like Debussy’s “Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune” are too beautiful to be forgotten. Yes, the music is still important but is also not alive. It is like a fossil, something from the past, something we must preserve and admire. Leave resurrection to the prophets.

Frank Gehry Designs Another Hospital for Classical Music

In a recent essay about the opening of the New World Center in Miami Beach, *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross points out that when the building’s architect, Frank Gehry, designed Walt Disney Concert Hall (completed in 2003) for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, “His aim was to present the orchestra as a vibrant organism, not as a descript form trapped within a fortress of culture.” The critic then states that the New World Center, which cost \$160 million to build and is often described as marking something of a redirection in the architect’s world-famous design program – a program that began, of course, with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (a building, by the way, that’s devoted to contemporary art) – is “an even more radical articulation of the same idea [as the Disney Hall].”

The Dream

After spending a day reading reviews about the center and looking at YouTube videos made by giddy, sunbaked visitors of the building and its park, I had a dream. In that dream, I found myself in the main performance hall of the New World Center. An orchestra composed of students (the building is, after all, a school) played Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. The performance was projected on the screens above us. But what my dream started to focus on were the sheets of music—the symbols of a music from a very distant time. At this moment,



ABOVE: New World Center Performance Hall featuring projections from *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Photo: Claudia Uribe

Though boxy and not as flamboyant as the other music buildings, the New World Center is architecture as a hospital for the arts. It does everything not to be what, in fact, it is: an institution. If Gehry’s building were to look institutional, to appear noble, or somber, or marbly, or grounded in history (I have in mind Robert Venturi’s part of the Seattle Art Museum), then it would reinforce the actual state of the art, an organism that’s no longer vibrant. The New World Center is not only lively looking – and has a lively music park designed by the Dutch firm West 8 – its main performance hall is dominated by several curved surfaces for large-scale video projections. It’s the spectacle of new technologies compensating for old technologies used in the production of music by long-dead composers—Wagner, Beethoven, Mozart and so on.

the dream turned dark. It became more and more about this dead person in the music, in the past. The performance was not so much a collaboration among the living, but more like a séance, the living communicating with the dead. When I woke up, the sun was in my face.

CHARLES MUDEDE is a filmmaker, lecturer, culture critic and Associate Editor at *The Stranger*.

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Neighborhoods That Fire on All Cylinders

A CONVERSATION WITH LIZ DUNN

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Recently, BUILD llc sat down with visionary developer Liz Dunn for an interview regarding her philosophy regarding the evolution of neighborhoods.

The work you're doing at your development company Dunn + Hobbes fosters "urban villages" and currently focuses on infill projects and reusing old buildings along Seattle's Pike-Pine corridor. You've created some wonderful places in town, including 1310 E. Union, the Piston & Ring Building, the sleek Agnes Lofts and the recently completed Melrose Market. Tell us a bit about how this focus came about. I started with one piece of land that no one else seemed to want. It was 3,200 square feet—smaller than most single family lots in Seattle but zoned for six stories. I love skinny lots because they're such an interesting urban challenge—and the completed projects can have such great visual impact. The development we were seeing in Seattle at the time wasn't particularly inspiring, and skinny urban buildings can inject so much life into their blocks.

It was difficult to get the process going; that first project, 1310 E. Union, was an exercise in bootstrapping—pooling some equity with friends and miraculously finding a lender. I teamed up with Dave Miller [Miller Hull Partnership] on the project, and neither of us had ever done an urban mixed-use project before. But that was probably a blessing because we weren't hampered by pre-conceptions.

Development work is a treacherous business—what can be built all-too-often depends not on good intentions or talent but on the financial market and the banking system's willingness to lend. How are you keeping such a consistent level of quality in your projects? Building trust with lenders is an incremental thing. The process needs to go smoothly, everyone needs to get paid and the finished projects need to be good. And I think banks appreciate the positive press that comes with innovative projects that the community seems to appreciate. After 1310, the next time around, the same bank loaned money on a much larger assembly of properties and supported me in incrementally tackling the slices one by one—improving buildings and filling in urban voids. I guess I've had good luck finding lenders who believe in the long-term value of these urban neighborhoods and who understand that good urban infill isn't a cookie-cutter product.

Your concern for the well being of a neighborhood seems rare for a developer. Well, hopefully less rare, lately. I see the old guard finally moving over for a new generation of developers who are truly interested in urbanism. Traditionally, most developers used a model based on paper profit and not on building in places they would ever live. They'd have the demographic information but didn't really understand the dynamics of the neighborhood for which they were developing a new project.

I think there's a new breed of developer working at a smaller scale because they're building for themselves in the places they already live. And there's also a demographic shift underway in terms of where and how a lot of people want to live. Developers and architects are creating places that they actually want to live in (and often do), so they care about characteristics like the sidewalk life, neighborhood character, independent retail and having "eyes on the street."

I started with one piece of land that no one else seemed to want.

You're speaking our language. Do you think it's possible for a developer to be intimately involved in a project and still be profitable at the same time?

Partly, it's a question of time frame. Traditional developers and institutional investors want a pro forma that shows an easy 5–10 year payback and often try to flip a project as soon as it's finished. If you design and build a project in the right location that you believe in yourself – so you know it's got durability and long-term appeal – and you can afford to hang on to it, the bigger profit will come later. I would also say that for long-term design appeal, you're better off with a small site than a

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big one. Every neighborhood has a scale, and it's really hard to make a crisp, enduring statement on an over-sized site, where the same elements have to be repeated too many times—which is why those projects look like outdated sardine boxes from day one. Some banks and investors are finally coming around to this way of thinking—though it would be nice if someone would set up a bank for people who do great adaptive reuse and nice skinny infill and an equity fund to repeat this a few times within a neighborhood, so that the benefits of the projects can play off each other.

Your mission statement about attracting more people to live and work in urban neighborhoods is inspiring, and it seems to be working quite well. How do you measure your progress and success so far? One way I track progress or success is by the presence of other elements in a neighborhood that aren't my projects but maybe were encouraged by my work or the planning we've put into place in those areas. The slow, incremental layering and evolution of a neighborhood is an important indicator of progress to me; the eclectic mix of adaptive reuse combined with modern infill that allows for a lot of local business opportunity—people milling around on the sidewalk day and evening, enough of them to support even more local businesses and great places to hang-out. It's a virtuous circle until one day you know you've been too successful and the out-of-neighborhood developers with their bad, too-big projects turn up! It's tricky.

One of the benefits of your work is more people walk around the Pike-Pine corridor rather than drive. Does it defeat the purpose when you create a neighborhood so cool that everyone wants to get in their cars and drive there? Ideally, everyone would have their own urban village like the Pike-Pine corridor

within walking distance of where they live, so they wouldn't need to drive to ours. I think that's gradually happening in Seattle. Or they could take the streetcar across town, or taxis would be more ubiquitous. But in the meantime, yes, we hear complaints about parking. The problem is you can't have this great walking environment – the

I work on lots of “green building” policy issues, but my personal definition of sustainability puts a lot more focus on neighborhoods of buildings, physical connectedness, social and economic opportunity, resiliency and sustainable infrastructure.

cool, old buildings and skinny infill and clusters of retail and restaurants spilling out onto the street – and have parking in these buildings. It wouldn't work economically for the owners, and we'd have gaping parking entries on every block. *The Seattle Times* did a big story on parking a few years ago in which I tried to explain that if we had put a lot of parking in the Pike-Pine corridor, the neighborhood wouldn't be successful in all the ways that make people want to visit it—but of course, they took one weird, little sound bite.

You're involved with the Preservation Green Lab; what are the current happenings of that group? It's a policy effort, kind of a think-tank that I started up for the National Trust two years ago. Rather than “preservation” in the traditional sense, the goal is to make the case that all of our old buildings are part of thriving urban environments and give them an identity in sustainable urbanism. Many of these older buildings were built in a far more sturdy and adaptable way than contemporary buildings.

And people love them—tenants, customers, visitors. We're really just trying to keep old buildings—not as “historic” structures but as buildings that are interesting and useful and constantly being adapted. **As someone who's in the trenches of urban issues, do you see solutions to better bring an integration of old and new to the United States?** I think you need to get it out of the hands of the type of preservationists who are only considering the history of a building, not its future. The conversation needs to include adaptation and reuse. The Pike-Pine corridor provides a good example of a new policy to retain buildings while not making them so

precious that they're unusable. We need a smaller grain model for the preservation of ordinary buildings here in the United States.

We're not big fans of the term “green”—what's your take on it? Oh, dear. I'm probably going to get myself in trouble for saying this because I work on lots of “green building” policy issues, but my personal definition of sustainability puts a lot more focus on neighborhoods of buildings, physical connectedness, social and economic opportunity, resiliency and sustainable infrastructure. To me, sustainability means neighborhoods that fire on all cylinders. I don't mean to pick on green building, but design schools are way too focused on green building technology and don't see the forest for the trees, so to speak.

We couldn't agree more. What are some new strategies that you're applying to design and development? I'm interested in new kinds of conservation overlays for neighborhoods that aren't about bottling up the past but adapting into the future, helping this pencil-out for owners of older buildings by making adaptive reuse more flexible from a code perspective, and promoting policies that encourage public infrastructure investments for things like district heating systems in older neighborhoods. And policies for letting development capacity get moved around within a neighborhood



so that reusing buildings doesn't come with a penalty. In the Pike-Pine corridor, you now get a density bonus if you build on top of an existing building, rather than demolishing it, and we want to create a program that makes it possible to sell unused air rights. Again, if we can focus more on creatively reusing buildings, and offering incentives to do so, that's a good thing.

Are you a fan of the urban planner and hero of ours, Jane Jacobs? I know it's a cliché, but I'm a huge fan of Jane Jacobs. She's still the smartest urban design person ever, even though she's not with us anymore. You're probably familiar with the website called walkscore.com, which rates the walkability of neighborhoods. We've talked about how they should come out with a version that adds in all the Jane Jacobs' concepts about building age and diversity and local businesses, and they could call it Jane Score. They've promised me that they will get right on it.

What advice do you have for the next generation of architects coming up the ranks? The next generation of architects is going to have to embrace the idea that there is glory in adaptive reuse. Architecture schools still set unrealistic expectations for young architects – namely, that success as professionals is about creating new icons – whereas I think the role of the architect is becoming more about adding a thoughtful new layer of design to something that someone else has created. The profession is becoming more about contextualism and urban infill. There is pride and visibility in that, and some architects are embracing this change more quickly than others.

How are the roles at Dunn + Hobbes divided between you and your business partner? Well, my original partner was my dog, Hobbes, and he hasn't been with us for a while.

That's not the answer we were expecting. Sorry to hear about your dog. In the early days, before I had a real office, Hobbes would be the reason I would get out of my pajamas—so that he could be taken out for walks. So to answer your question about roles, I guess he scheduled my meetings.

What are you currently working on? At the moment, in addition to being Director of the Preservation Green Lab, I'm studying urban policy in the Cities program at the London School of Economics.

What's it like getting assigned homework after you've basically saved an entire neighborhood? Homework still sucks, especially group projects. I mean, my group is great, but remember when you were in school and you had to work in groups and no one would ever do any work? It's still like that. But the nice difference this time around is that I'm super-interested in the content.



TOP: Piston & Ring Building, Seattle, Washington
ABOVE: Agnes Lofts, Seattle, Washington
OPPOSITE PAGE: Melrose Market, Seattle, Washington
ALL PHOTOS: BUILD llc

Is there anything we didn't ask that you'd like to cover? It's important to make clear that I am both pro-density and pro-building-reuse—I think we can do both successfully within the same neighborhoods. But policymakers seem to focus on making the most dense places even more dense—when suburbia also needs density. So let's spread the love.

LIZ DUNN is the Consulting Director of the Preservation Green Lab of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which leads research and policy initiatives to help cities leverage their existing buildings and older neighborhoods in order to achieve their sustainability and climate action goals. She is also the founder and principal of Dunn + Hobbes LLC, a Seattle-based developer of urban adaptive reuse and infill projects.

BUILD llc is an industrious design-build firm in Seattle run by Kevin Eckert and Andrew van Leeuwen. BUILD llc's work focuses on permanence, sustainability and efficiency. BUILD llc maintains an architectural office, a furniture workshop and a development company, and is most known for their cultural leadership expressed in frequent posts on their BUILD blog, www.buildllc.com.



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The Long Walk 2011
King County Regional Trails System,
Seattle to Snoqualmie Falls

Long Walk 2010,
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4
CULTURE

info@4culture.org

206.296.7580

This summer artist Susan Robb and 50 trail trampers will walk more than 50 miles along the Regional Trails System from Seattle to Snoqualmie Falls. Over the course of four days – July 28th through 31st – the group will experience the landscape of King County in a unique way, camp in unusual locations, celebrate with a formal dinner, and engage with interactive works by various artists.

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If we are going to design a sustainable way of living, we need to take “the good life” more seriously. We don’t need raw hedonism – waiter, more champagne! – or monkish asceticism, but instead, something in between. The good life must be broad enough to span from the battered, Depression-born “American Dream” to Aristotle’s thesis that happiness, our most important drive, can be satisfied by living well and doing good. When it comes to achieving a more climate-sensitive way of living, advocates of sustainable urbanism have left out recommending we wear hair shirts, yet urban planners, among others, still find themselves telling people to “eat their oatmeal”—i.e. “accept having fewer, but hopefully greener, lifestyle choices, because it’s good for you.” I’ve always hated oatmeal, I’ve never liked being told what to eat and I’m not alone in these sentiments.

For this issue of *ARCADE*, we challenged a range of designers, thinkers and activists to respond to this proposal: To get to the sustainable future we want, we have to stop and remember that our goal can’t just be to live green, it also has to be to live well. Some responded with clarifying questions; others offered strong alternative visions for what a good life is. These perspectives include deliberately minimalist living that looks, in part, to 14th century Japan; a future that includes “biophilic” habitation, even in urban neighborhoods, and an existence in which family and community trump “life style.” Most of the examples are concrete: sharing a garden, riding the bus, cleaning up a river, going to the coffee house at the corner or helping a neighborhood to rebuild.

With that said, we roundly challenged this issue’s premise early on: What’s the point of the good life to the millions, and globally, billions, who have such limited choices? Point taken—yet there are still better or worse choices many of us can make, and sustainable alternatives for basic needs will only be made if they offer satisfaction – make cultural sense – in the here and now, as well as for future generations. (For example, see reports on the work developing biochar stoves in Latin America at SeaChar.org.) And for the US middle class, the next American dream can’t just be that we should be happy with less – eat your oatmeal – but rather, it needs to be about expanding opportunity.

Design is a way of thinking, and it has an extraordinarily powerful ability to shape the way we live, and in particular, the way we choose to live. The Northwest has been on the cutting edge of redesigning daily life for decades. It can come from grassroots organizing, enlightened government policy, and it can come from corporations, whether for love or money; Microsoft, Starbucks, Amazon, Costco and Nike are all adept at finding new ways of defining living well. Corporations have a range of motivations, and their actions produce a range of unintended consequences (do we really benefit from fewer bookstores?). Nonetheless, these are fundamentally transformative ways of producing and consuming, and they are at the scale of change we talk about when we discuss a new urbanism that can last through this century and into the next.

As this feature shows, the Northwest continues to be a place for ideas and actions that can change the way we live. Sustainability advocates know that they have to present a future that is desired and chosen, not mandated and enforced. If we are open to it, design can harness the power of aspiration and choice, leading to diverse new ways of thinking, whether from the corporate suite or down the street. We can design a smart, green life, but it needs to have rewards. Whether we’re 7 or 70, rich or poor, to keep building a sustainable system to address health, equity and climate change, our lives need to be good.

RAY GASTIL is a city planner and urban designer. His work focuses on making connections between the built environment and the culture of cities. A former City planning director for Manhattan and Seattle, he now runs Gastil-works Planning & Design based in Pioneer Square, Seattle.

THE

GOOD LIFE

RECONSIDERED

Ray Gastil



TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE GOOD LIFE

Interview by
August de los Reyes &
David McColgin

With Ray’s statement on “the good life” as background to our interview, we asked two local residents their views on the topic. Jessica Geenen works for Puget Sound Energy as a program manager for the Energy Efficient Communities program. Jenny Kam is a freelance designer whose master’s thesis in industrial design centered on the topic of hedonism. We asked Jessica and Jenny an identical set of questions. The following piece reveals facets of the same topic from two independent points of view.

From your personal perspective, what is “the good life”?

JG → I see the good life as having connections to family, friends, community and the natural world, along with enough financial freedom to enjoy these without stress. To feel like you are contributing to society and have a greater purpose through your everyday work is also a factor.

JK → The good life is one that makes you full and keeps you that way. It’s an exercise in judgment when choosing the bits of fun and pleasure with which to fill your life. The good life is crafted from the satisfaction that results from establishing balance in your experiences. It’s about recognizing your need to unwind on the couch in a warm cocoon of blanket-y goodness during the dead of winter and taking the opportunity to do so.

Do we have to make people “eat their oatmeal”—do what is good for both the individual and the whole?

JG → Yes, I do think we have to make people “eat their oatmeal” because of our shared reliance on other people and the environment we cohabitate. Our society has evolved into thinking that we and those in our immediate social or familial circles are most important and deserve the bulk of our attention. However, everything we do has an impact on others, from the factory workers who made our t-shirts in a way that allowed for their cheap prices to the developing world river ecosystems that are poisoned with heavy metals from our disposed electronic gadgets. In the more affluent US, we are blind to the “externalities” associated with our everyday decisions and so are unable to see the effects we have on others. The word “community” comes from the Latin roots *cum*, meaning “with,” and *munus*, meaning “responsibility.”

JK → Yes. At the very least, “eating our oatmeal” contrasts how pleasurable everything else can be, but more importantly, our future well-being depends on it. We all know this “oatmeal” is good for us, but resistance persists because the hard part isn’t eating it, it’s learning not to resent having to chow down. Some of this indignation stems from not seeing the larger picture—that “oatmeal” is beneficial for everyone, not just the eater. When this becomes evident, coercion can be removed because there will be understanding that the payoff is bigger than the price.

What role does pleasure play?

JG → I think pleasure plays a key role in how we define the good life as more recent generations have been taught from a young age that it is OK to completely indulge. No longer is carnival food something we only get at the fair once a year—it’s available on street corners and at airports. Shopping has become something we can do at any time, day or night, online on our couch or while on the bus on our smart phones. The good life has been defined as the ability to engage in pleasurable activities whenever we want; immediate gratification has become the *modus operandi* of our society.

JK → On the surface, it would seem that pleasure is simply the antithesis of “oatmeal,” but in fact, it is the sugar that washes the medicine down and the only reason we continue to put up with anything unpleasant. It is a catalyst for satisfaction as well as a buffer against the mundane. Its presence in every stage of every experience beckons us to unearth, relish and succumb to it. In sustaining the good life, as with most other things, pleasure can be most effectively employed when enjoyed in moderation and in multiple varieties. Even in small and infrequent dosages, pleasure is filled with meaning and value, contributes to a rewarding life and should never be left out of any endeavor. In essence, pleasure is everything.

What role should government, business and other institutions play?

JG → I think they play a critical role in ensuring the good life, as these entities are key societal agents whose actions impact the greater whole. They can work to ensure that their products or services have little negative impact on society and guide their customers to sustainable choices. For example, the UK retailer Marks and Spencer, through their Plan A initiative, has been working to eliminate unsustainable product options from its shelves. Or, conversely, companies can continue to manufacture their products in ways that impose negative externalities of pollution and decreased social conditions on those – usually the poor and marginalized – who do not have the option to avoid them, nor the means nor voice to speak out.

Businesses and governments can make these decisions, but as consumers we also have to “eat our oatmeal” and start paying the true cost of the items we purchase and the services we use. This is part of the shared responsibility we must have in our world community.

JK → Because government and large institutions are so prominent, they have the obligation to create an environment in which we can readily operate responsibly. Regulating without seeming like an overbearing tyrant is a daunting task but crucial to preserving the good life. If they can provide communities with a solid platform for tackling meaningful challenges, people will gravitate toward a common goal and become involved in the process together.

Many designers shape the interaction among people and their environments. What should our (we designers) goals be?

JG → Designers have a huge opportunity to shape the interaction of people and their environments in a sustainable way that does not have to severely impact comfort and convenience. Through research conducted by community-based social marketing practitioners, it has been found that one of the more common barriers that keeps people from acting in more sustainable ways is the added inconvenience. Designers have the ability to help create appliances, tools and processes that decrease feelings of inconvenience and remove that barrier. An example is the screen brightness setting on televisions. Many showrooms want televisions to have the brightest settings to ensure that they are attractive to customers. These settings are not necessary in the home, but the default setting remains throughout the life of the TV, needlessly wasting the energy associated with a brighter screen. Here is an opportunity for the implementation of a very basic, sustainable design solution that would not sacrifice the quality of the product. The simple goal of creating for people, planet and profit is a feasible way to think about the work of design.

JK → We should be leading the way and designing with substance, starting by refining and updating our methods to adapt to our changing environment. Sustainability used to be an unquestioned and inherent part of design, nothing like the recent wave of green veneers slapped onto products (“now made with bamboo!”). We must design for context and consider the value of our work. Just because you can design something new doesn’t mean it’s an improvement, and designers need to be critical of such practices.

Much of the world operates by problem-solving, including design. The instinctive tendency is to find the problem and right the wrong (or remove the obstruction altogether), but that’s only half of the equation. Our attention should also be devoted to studying enduring objects and ideas, not only looking at why something died but why it survived or evolved in the course of history.

Anything specific for the Pacific Northwest?

JG → The Pacific Northwest has a great opportunity to influence design around sustainability. Much of the rest of the country looks to this region for new ideas in sustainability, green living and innovation. However, we in the PNW also need to keep up with what the rest of the world is doing on this front, as Europe and Canada are far ahead of us in terms of living these ideas; the more common action in these places is the sustainable one, and doing otherwise is unthinkable.

JK → We pride ourselves in being at the head of the pack in sustainability. Here, the geography right outside our window is a daily reminder of what’s at stake. Entire communities of passionate people from locavores to urban beekeepers dedicate themselves to greener lives and are spreading the message. It’s a different kind of status symbol now: The smart kids are cool and we know it. The attitudes here reflect that; we are spurring on change throughout the region (and beyond) by confidently talking the talk and walking the walk. But the PNW still has a long way to go.

AUGUST DE LOS REYES is Design Director at Artefact and a visiting lecturer and affiliate instructor at the University of Washington; he was formerly Principal User Experience Manager at Windows at Microsoft and Creative Director for the Windows Platform Core Innovation Team. Reyes’ broad approach to design is focused on investigating how and why people love what they do—connecting emotional experience to the functional goals of design.

DAVID MCCOLGIN is a researcher at Artefact. He has an ongoing interest in design for public benefit, influencing positive behavior and the pursuit of a tenable good life.

BUILDING THE CASE FOR RAINIER BEACH

Sally J. Clark

Rainier Beach calls us to do something more than talk about zoning heights. It's a neighborhood where we must check our rhetoric about sustainability and diversity—and then step up.

We're the government. We're here to help you lead "the good life," to guide your hand, reduce your calories, stub out your cigarettes, kill your car, shrink your foot print. We are either the taxpayers' collective desire to stem earth-killing excess or the Super Civic Nanny without the charming British accent.

I chair the Seattle City Council's Committee on the Built Environment, the committee for land use and zoning, and spend a fair amount of time praying for a usable crystal ball. I hope for great outcomes but often worry about the possible travesties of design, construction and profit-at-public-expense made possible by my votes. My colleagues and I talk about using our positions as policymakers to "set the table," to unleash great actions by others by virtue of the right government rules and government spending. Like others before us, we hope people won't look back years from now and ask, "What could they have been thinking?"

In the coming two years, Seattle will re-tool zoning and development rules for several neighborhoods, including Rainier Beach, situated in the far south-end of the city. Rainier Beach is Seattle's most ethnically diverse and impoverished neighborhood, and an update to its plan has just commenced. Few "big dogs" will play in the debate over Rainier Beach; it will fly below the radar as it has done for decades, despite the promise of its location between Lake Washington and the light rail.

When it comes to supporting children and families, Rainier Beach has scores of social service saviors doing great work, but poverty, continuing patterns of neglect and fractured families continue to shorten horizons. In 2009–2010, at Rainier Beach High School only 14 percent of 10th graders were deemed proficient in math and only 49 percent of students enrolled in a four-year college within one year of graduation. Southeast Seattle children experience higher asthma rates than their peers in other parts of the region, and adults report higher levels of heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

It's hard not to see these challenges reflected in the landscape. The development errors of the past, compounded by unique landscape hurdles and a history of urban flight and failure, mean a reasonable definition of "the good life" sits out of reach for too many. Standing at the corner of Rainier Ave. S. and S. Henderson St. you have a sense that the good life hasn't stopped here in a long, long time.

What are we willing to do about that? There are systemic economic and institutional factors, as well as personal accountability factors, that plague multiple generations of Rainier Beach families, but a persistent regard for Rainier Beach as a suburban neighborhood holds back progress, as well. Development in this area should change the very shape of its core and contribute to new opportunities for this part of Seattle.

In 1937, Rainier Ave. changed from supporting rail to automobiles, effectively shrinking the city and setting off the in-city suburbanization Rainier Beach still grapples with today. Approximately 10,000 cars per day pass through the area's central business district on a four-(sometimes five) lane roadway as they travel to and from Renton, Skyway or the South Ryan Way ramps to I-5. On one end of the business district, a small community heart beats lightly at the intersection of Rainier/57th Ave. S. and Seward Park

Ave. S. but the volume and speeds on Rainier sap its strength. On the other end, the corner of Rainier and Henderson presents the largest, most complex and potentially most expensive challenge for planners and advocates of urban density. This northern crossroads of the business district is a no-man's land of set-back buildings and indefensible spaces dominated by cars and, too often, crime.

The intersection of Rainier Ave. S. and S. Henderson St. has been a hot spot for drug deals, for random shootings, for fights. It's one of the last places neighborhood people would choose to take a walk or spend time in. And yet it is the crossroads of the community, the way to get anywhere else—to the grocery store, the community center, the lake, light rail and the Chief Sealth bike path.

Instead of forcing people into austerity to save the planet, we can give people options that are both personally and globally satisfying. In Rainier Beach, we are further from providing people with these options than we are in almost any other Seattle neighborhood. Despite the incredible natural surroundings of the area, willing (if not impatient) community advocates and significant investments by government, the urban – rather suburban – landscape works against us.

In the same way that "we" – government and the private sector – chose South Lake Union for investment, we can choose Rainier Beach. Choosing means changing the land use rules (e.g. building heights) and public investment. We can choose ways that fulfill the neighborhood plan's vision of development and benefit the community without displacing it—development that provides stability and opportunity for the people living there now as well as new comers attracted to the area by features such as the lake and light rail. Rainier Beach calls us to do something more than talk about zoning heights. It's a neighborhood where we must check our rhetoric about sustainability and diversity—and then step up.

In regard to Rainier Beach, I worry less about people in the future asking, "What were they thinking?" and more about them saying, "Why didn't they do anything sooner?"

SALLY J. CLARK is a Seattle City Council Member and chairs the Committee on the Built Environment.

In an online conversation, Matthew Stadler responded to feature editor Ray Gastil's statements on "the good life."

MS → I'm sympathetic to the call for the good life, for living well. I'm even convinced that the handful of ways in which my life has become less wasteful (I have no car; I'm predisposed to buy locally grown food and locally manufactured goods; I lend and borrow things from neighbors) are attractive, enviable improvements in my life and not sacrifices in any way. I tout them while straining not to crow about them. And my touting is heard and received with sympathy, if not envy, by scads of like-minded people, from Brooklyn to Los Feliz to Berkeley.

But in Beaverton and North Portland, where I live, where I've had these very same conversations in many settings over the last four years, I'm sometimes received with suspicion. The info is the same; my attitude and invitation are the same; but something predisposes the encounter toward a kind of polarization and alienation. What is it?

RG → Maybe it is similar to the anti-carpooling trend. Carpooling, despite increasing gas prices, has been steadily declining, and studies indicate that it is not just because of new journey-to-work patterns or family responsibilities, but preference. Sharing seems to be on an exponential increase in terms of one's personal life – the social media era – but there's no parallel increase in sharing resources. I think the core of why you see polarization and suspicion may be that outside of Brooklyn-Los Feliz-Berkeley, there's a strong sense that sharing is about taking something away. Whether this sense is manufactured by opinion-makers or experience, it means that if you talk about car sharing, it leads to the suspicion that you want to take away people's cars. And when sharing is presented as part of a cohesive vision of, say, reciprocity, that only makes it worse—part of a whole scheme of "takings," from land use to gun control.

MS → Notably, the Brooklyn-Los Feliz-Berkeley axis can also get pretty pissy about sharing when it comes to sharing metro resources with "wasteful" suburban communities. Point being—no one has the monopoly on virtue here. I believe the real shift came with the Reagan era and post-Reagan fear-mongering about strangers. That brought carpooling down and stopped most of us from hitchhiking, that and the fact that people regard their cars as domestic space, a part of the home that moves. Other sharing is on the increase, as you point out, but it's mostly digital info sharing.

So what physical, material things and spaces do we all share easily and without suspicion? I guess the public library is the best example. The library is common and embraced in all demographics, isn't it? I mean towns, suburbs, cities; there is no

demographic that uniquely or strongly rejects the library, is there? Where I live there's also a tool library, a couple community centers (gyms, swimming pools, games, classes), and of course, there's mass transit. My eleven-year old uses them all, too, with never a hesitation on either of our parts.

But I do make extra efforts to predispose him to like strangers. The anti-sharing habits we've both been speaking of seem to me always rooted in a demonizing of strangers—"outsiders." So long as our sharing is conducted in self-curated spaces (such as interest groups, say, Friends of the Trees, Neighborhood Block Watch or online spaces like Facebook), we can continue to believe there are the good people we know and the many bad people we call "strangers"—those who are outside of our group, unseen.

The question I want to pose to you is: can planners create the circumstances in which strangers come to trust or look on other strangers as resources and friends? The library does it, for me, anyway. Ditto the bus. Maybe urban planning and design could oblige us to encourage positive encounters with strangers more often. I wonder what that would look like. Over time such encounters would go a long way toward shifting the patterns of resource sharing. How about we legalize downtown camping and provide sufficient fresh water and clean toilets? Or we somehow get all ages and classes, from poor to rich, onto mass transit?

TRUSTING STRANGERS

Matthew Stadler

RG → Trust is a two-way street, one that requires "circumstances" that can survive and grow over time, changing neighbors and changing economies. You've hit on a fundamental question for the next phase of cities and one that must have a basis that isn't about whether or not you believe in climate change, but rather, in whether you are willing to trust anyone who isn't just like you. Plenty of road work ahead on that score.

MATTHEW STADLER is a writer and editor in Portland, Oregon. He often writes about cities, most recently in his anthology *Where We Live Now* and forthcoming in his book, *Deventer* (010, Rotterdam).

PHOTO: Beaverton, Shawn Records, 2009



THE GOOD LIFE

A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Roger Fernandes

I was taught by one of my cultural teachers, Vi Hilbert / taq-se-blu of the Upper Skagit people, that among the Puget Salish tribes of Western Washington there is a concept called “sweeping the floor.” This is the act of sweeping the ceremonial floor with cedar boughs of anything that might impede the ceremony, such as stones or debris. This activity also refers to how people should communicate regarding important topics. We must make sure that crucial things are discussed beforehand so that they may not impede our conversation.

With this in mind, I present a few points that hopefully will help illuminate a Native American perspective on the topic at hand, “the good life.”

First, you must know that I was born in the city. I was not raised in my culture, so it seems my life has been a backwards journey to learn the ways of the Native S’Klallam people. I am therefore pretty familiar with the demands of the modern world and its expectations of how a person should live in it. I therefore speak to you from a place somewhere in the middle between two very different worlds.

It is important to consider how a culture defines value-based concepts like the good life or a good person or the meaning of life. There is no universal definition that applies to all people. For example, a few years ago I heard some Masai men from Kenya speaking at a gathering in North Seattle during a trip they had made to visit the United States and Canada. They were dressed in their tribal clothing and despite the frigid winter weather outside, they were wearing simple woven toga-like coverings under their jackets and sandals with no socks. They explained that since they are mountain people they found our weather similar to their own.

They were asked, “What do you find most curious about American culture?” They looked at each other and smiled, obviously having asked themselves the same question.

One of them responded by pulling a dollar bill from his coat pocket. He said, “We find it strange that you think this is wealth.” He waved the money in front of the audience. “You think this is wealth. We believe wealth is cattle and children.”

Another more local example is the potlatch, a ceremony conducted by most Northwest Coast tribes from Alaska to the Puget Sound. The potlatch serves a number of purposes within these cultures, including announcing important events like a marriage or inheritance, with the host paying those in attendance with gifts to remember the announcement. It also allows a redistribution of wealth and was central to traditional tribal economies.

What makes this distribution of gifts special is that the hosts prove their wealth and prestige by giving away all of their possessions. There is a S’Klallam song sung as the guests leave the potlatch house that translates to, “I know how to give everything away.” Wealth is not to be accumulated by the individual and kept for him or herself; it is to be shared and given freely among the people.

In his book, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom in a Modern World*, the author David Maybury-Lewis presents his findings and observations as he looks at the impact civilized cultures and their city centers have had on local tribal cultures; one important critique he makes is that cities, by their very nature, destroy them. The things that make civilizations function are the things that tear tribal cultures apart. The individual is more important than the group. Competition supersedes cooperation. Material wealth over social balance.

He boiled everything down to a simple universal observation: In tribal cultures, people are more important than things; in civilized cultures, things are more important than people. As we watch some members of Congress propose to eliminate programs that serve our neediest – poor children, mothers and the homeless – all for the sake of a balanced budget, we must ask ourselves what this culture values. Money over people?

With all of the above in mind, I asked several local Native people from different tribal groups their thoughts on what makes a good life. I did not share my thoughts in asking the question, as I wanted to hear their philosophies and ideas independent from my own.

“We find it strange that you think this is wealth.” He waved the money in front of the audience. “You think this is wealth. We believe wealth is cattle and children.”

They were as follows:

“When I have a job that allows me to be with my family. One that doesn’t take me away from them. That is a good life.

I once had a pool table, but I only wanted it so my family could do something together. Kids, being kids, they trashed it eventually. I put a sheet of plywood over it and covered it with a blanket. It became another table in our house.”

Toby Joseph *Apache/Southern Ute filmmaker*

“Probably the good life was when I lived off the land in Wrangell, Alaska. I hunted and fished and ate crabs and clams. I lived a subsistence lifestyle. There are times when I get close to the good life, but I have to pay bills and the rent.

Money is an exchange of energy. I make my art and I’m happiest when I make a new coastal design no one has seen before. But to make art, I have to make money. Selling my art is like an affirmation that my community supports my work.”

Gary Stevens *Tlingit artist*

“Family is first in my definition of a good life. Family helps in the development of an individual’s identity. Parents need to help their children develop their identities and places in the world.

I think it’s interesting that people will move thousands of miles from their families for a job and be away from their families. They have developed substitutes for being there. Telephone calls and e-mails or sending money.”

Jacki Swanson *Muckleshoot/Wasco elder*

“My good life is enjoying my children. Raising them and watching them grow. It is a challenge to raise children in the best way possible.

I also think it is finding beauty and fun in the small things. Things that are free of marketing. And learning not to want things unnecessary to your life.”

Robert Free *Tewa human rights advocate*

“To be contented in life is a good life. Being happy with who you are. I’m still searching. Everybody is looking for a home and the good life is when you find that home.

The society we live in tells us all the half-truth. It teaches you to want more and not be happy as you are.”

Luke Black Elk *Oglala Lakota elder*



In hearing the thoughts, beliefs and philosophies of these and other Native people, I had my own ideas about the good life reinforced. People, especially family, are more important than material wealth and personal satisfaction. If my family and people are happy, then I am happy.

Of course this is what most people, Native and non-Native, might say. Family is important, but we now live in a time when civilized culture demands we sacrifice our human connections for the good of this culture and its economy. iPhone, iPad, Myspace—all speak to the individual isolated and disconnected from family and community. Are we easier to control when we are disconnected?

It is a struggle these days to be a human being. Do we modern folk live lives of quiet desperation? I remember a line from an English writer that said, “Be kind for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.” These sentiments seem to be from a human being who recognizes the struggle we face as we try to make sense of a relatively new social order called civilization. I am simply hoping that as civilizations continue to develop, they can remember what it means to be human, factoring that into their social fabrics to the point where people become more important than things.

Another one of my teachers, the late su-bi-yay/ Bruce Miller of the Skokomish people, told me, “It’s very simple. Go out and lift people up. Tell them how good they are, how important they are to their people, how much we appreciate them. Praise them and tell them how much we need them. If you can do this, you have done enough.”

So my take on the good life is that it must involve others. And since I am an artist and storyteller in the service of my people, then I lead a good life—I do work that I believe is beneficial to my culture as a whole and might keep it alive for our descendants. For as surely as I am connected to my ancestors, I am connected to the ones who will be.

ROGER FERNANDES is a member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Nation, a Native artist, storyteller and educator. He works in a variety of mediums including painting, drawing, printmaking and sculpture, and has been active as a storyteller since 1995. He has a degree in Native American Studies from The Evergreen State College.

ABOVE: The Little Bush Sits Under the Tree and is Singing. Photo: Roger Fernandes

People, especially family, are more important than material wealth and personal satisfaction. If my family and people are happy, then I am happy.

ALLEYCAT ACRES

CREATING COMMON GROUND TO PLANT THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Amber Banks



ABOVE: Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn looks on as volunteers build beds and paths at Alleycat's Beacon Hill farm site. Photo: Amber Banks

Shouldn't everyone afford and have access to healthy, nutritious food? Under our existing paradigm, one's ability to access fresh fruits and vegetables depends on class status.

What we do with our empty spaces says much about what we value as a community. Some communities build high-rise condominiums, some build fancy beachfront resorts, others build playgrounds. The problem lies in the extent to which communities are involved in the claiming of their empty spaces or if others do the claiming for them. It seems like often times a community has very little say in how its vacant spaces are occupied. Gentrification comes to mind.

At Alleycat Acres, we plant seeds in empty spaces because it's a way to reclaim and place space back into the hands of its rightful owners. These small, vacant lots turned urban farms serve as places for people in the city to reconnect with food, each other and the land. Our farms are 100 percent volunteer-run, where people from all walks of life work alongside one another to redefine urban living in a space that may have otherwise never existed. Contained within these farms is a story about the complicated relationship between people, community and food. It is a story about not only re-envisioning the cityscape, but also, how food is a binding force between us all, regardless of where we live.

When we first began to clear space for an urban farm in Beacon Hill, we were eager to get community members involved. People walking by would ask who we were and what we were doing, but we also wanted to reach out in a direct, intentional way. During our work parties, groups would go door-to-door introducing Alleycat Acres and sharing its vision of community-run farms.

During one of our summer evening work parties, a thirteen-year-old boy named Alan, who lived in the apartment building next to our Beacon Hill farm, came over and asked if he could help. He said he had gotten into trouble at school, and his mom sent him over to work for us as his punishment. Although we did not exactly support the idea of farming as punishment, we enthusiastically welcomed him.

Alan was one of the last volunteers to leave that evening, and he came back on his own every week for the rest of the summer. He helped with every aspect

of the farm, from planting to harvests. He was always eager to learn and supported less experienced volunteers. At the end of the summer, Alan's mom told us that when a family friend asked how he spent his summer, he said he had a great time as a "founding member of Alleycat Acres."

According to WhyHunger, a nonprofit organization that aims to eliminate hunger and poverty both in the United States and globally, community food security is "a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice."

At the root of this concept is the question: Shouldn't everyone afford and have access to healthy, nutritious food? Under our existing paradigm, one's ability to access fresh fruits and vegetables depends on class status. In more affluent neighborhoods, residents have their pick of places to shop, from traditional groceries to Whole Foods or a local co-op, and can easily purchase organic bananas or ten different types of greens and potatoes if they so choose. We are more likely to see people gardening in these communities, as well. In other neighborhoods, there are more corner stores than grocery stores, and one can more easily buy a

six-pack of beer than a six-pack of tomatoes. Fast food chains reign supreme, backyards are a luxury, and it's not unlikely to find a longer line at the food bank than in the grocery store.

The US industrial food system has dominated communities across the country now and for the better part of the 20th century. What once was a cure for hunger has become a disease. We believe empty lots and vacant spaces are the front lines in the battle to build sustainable, equitable food systems. The weapons are seeds and the strategy is simple. Grow food. Reclaimed spaces can be transformative.

When it comes to the good life in the future, we have each other, we have knowledge and we have a lot of empty spaces that we can either claim or see claimed for us. By choosing to transform this common ground, we have the opportunity to plant the seeds of change.

AMBER BANKS is currently a doctoral student at the University of Washington in Education Leadership and Policy Studies. Her research is focused on the connection between policy and practice in experiential learning programs. She is a former teacher and founding member of Alleycat Acres (www.alleycatacres.org).

When I first visited the Duwamish River, I was immediately struck by the raw industrial environment. I was out in the middle of the river in a kayak, and as we paddled past rusty pipes disgorging foul-colored water, an Eagle perched on an abandoned barge and small pockets of native grasses and shrubs defied asphalt parking lots, all under the glistening, regal shoulders of Mount Rainier. Where was I? How did I have no idea that Seattle had a river flowing north into Elliott Bay that also contained a massive Superfund site just south of downtown? It was the summer of 2002, and the EPA had recently declared the lower Duwamish River one of America's most toxic sites and one perilously close to where people lived and worked—yet completely out of sight of most Seattle citizens.

In 2003, I began my Masters at Antioch University, Seattle in the Whole Systems Design program. The fusion of systems theory and sustainable social change brought my years working in environmental education, arts, small business promotion, live music production and a desire to make a difference together at last. With the collaborative nurturing of my advisor, Dr. Farouk Seif, an architect of Egyptian descent, educator and artist with a passion for design communication, wholeness and semiotics, I found a powerful and peaceful method in the design approach he taught. Client and designer can move in a dance to achieve mutual outcomes, whether creating a house or organizing a grassroots community campaign; this type of design approach allows for desires to flow from client to designer and back again.

In the case of the Duwamish River Superfund site, for which I dedicated my Antioch education and ultimately created a thesis project in the community, the clients were the people who lived along the river, volunteers, artists, history buffs and cyclists daring to cruise the industrial streets, dedicated citizens who attended every community meeting and many others who didn't have the time or inclination to do so. I sought out the offbeat and marginalized, those who also saw beauty in the rusty barges sprouting trees and gleefully watched Harbor Seals plying the river. I found a common work ethic in the restoration ecologists, who worked tirelessly to breathe life back into the river shoreline, creating a "string of green pearls" along the Duwamish, and with crusaders like John Beal, who devoted his life to restoring the river.

Participatory design-in-action is exemplified by the Georgetown Riverview Restoration Project (GRRP), which I facilitated as a contractor working for the Georgetown Community Council. Through several rounds of City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Matching Funds and other grants, the GRRP aligned the Georgetown community's need for pedestrian improvements with the roadway work sought by the businesses that line 8th Avenue South, an industrialized street that dead-ends at the Duwamish River. The project forged a lasting partnership between industrial businesses, nearby residents, City staff and restoration advocates, who ultimately completed Seattle's first "industrial strength" natural drainage swale, sited in the frontage of a marine-industrial business.

A design approach to sustainable community involvement provides opportunity for the people most affected by the changes to be active agents in the process and puts the designer in a role of facilitator and coordinator of the project, rather than a sole instigator or martyr without whom the project would fall apart. A design approach can be dynamic, without an action plan set in stone, giving all parties the opportunity to modify and update the process as project elements change over an often long-term timeline. This type of design method also puts power in the hands of the people in the project's "watershed," linking previous actions, partnerships or community concerns with current goals and opportunities. Leave no stone unturned; look for partners and supporters in all forms. Design focused on community development has the power to make positive, sustainable changes in our neighborhoods and cities by linking past efforts to the present, honoring those who have paved the way, and looking forward with renewed enthusiasm.

CARI SIMSON is the principal of Urban Systems Design, providing community-based project management with a design-approach, whose clients include Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group, the Georgetown Community Council and others.

BELOW: Landscape designer Tom Knoblauch and volunteers install plants in April 2010 at the Markey Machinery "Industrial Strength" natural drainage site. Photo: Cari Simson

A DESIGN APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Cari Simson



BIOPHILIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Timothy Beatley

UNITING ASPIRATION AND CONSERVATION IN A PRECIOUS LANDSCAPE

James S. Russell

The Snoqualmie Valley introduces itself with a roar in its spectacular 270-foot-high falls, but then winds peacefully 43 miles north through flat farmlands between fir-covered ridges. Residents, farmers, foresters and officials are working out a new land ethos here, forging a new relationship with nature while living within it—messing with the rigid categories of pure preservation versus unrestrained urban growth. As I performed research for my book, *The Agile City*, I found it to be one of the few places in America that genuinely engages the question of how people can gracefully live and thrive in a precious landscape.

It's not what people started out to do. As part of the efforts of King County and Washington State to restore rapidly declining wild salmon stocks, officials have asked farmers to erect fences and main-

produced food. And the county has drawn a growth boundary to check the spread of Issaquah and Redmond, as well as funnel limited rural growth into the valley's towns. Drive into Duvall, a small town that had sat largely forgotten for decades, and you see its once desultory main street, Highway 203, lined with substantial new houses, apartment complexes, sidewalks and a strip shopping center sporting an appliqué of bungalow-style criss-crossing beams.

By focusing development into compact form and paying close attention to how much land is forested (and therefore permeable to water), King County

places, the valley retains a look of tradition, of wildness and authenticity. But it is a look that can only be sustained through a complex regulatory structure and a governmental engineering of the rural economy that may not prove sustainable. Even a home owner's addition of a barn can involve hair-splitting by biologists over whether a stopped-up ditch must be deemed a wetland of potential interest to a browsing maternal salmon. The invasiveness of the regulations has led to rural residents accusing urban elected officials of dumping the greatest burdens on them. (A court case overturned the 65 percent tree-cover requirement in 2009.) For the foreseeable future, the delicate balance among fish, farming, residents' aspirations and the pressures of urban growth can only be maintained by perpetual negotiation.

King County's imperfect efforts show that we can adapt landscapes and live within them in a more agile way. Moving ahead, we'll have to find ways to do more in a less onerous fashion. Yet when people say making salmon, farmers and rural residents all happy seems Pollyanish, I think back to high school. Then the valley hosted pioneering organic farmers who were generally deemed drug-addled nuts.

JAMES S. RUSSELL, FAIA, is the author of *The Agile City: Building Well Being and Wealth in an Era of Climate Change* (Island Press, 2011). He is also the national architecture critic for Bloomberg News. A Seattle native, he lives in New York City.

The county, it seems, must choose between farmers and salmon. It is trying to have both.

tain forested buffers as deep as 300 feet along rivers and streams. Protecting streams and spawning beds has become a huge public-works effort that may cost more than \$3 billion, with some elements of recovery taking as long as 50 years. In more urbanized areas, salmon-habitat restoration has stymied a mall developer hoping to expand over a buried stream and stopped a golf-course owner who sought irrigation water from a salmon-critical source. But a great deal of the effort – and the controversy – is focused on the rural Snoqualmie Valley, where no more than 10 percent of impervious surfaces and no more than 65 percent of the forest cover is gone, meaning the river basin can be restored to levels impossible in more urban areas.

Although the state and county are spending to naturalize river edges and remove levees so that seasonal floodwaters will flow safely into low-lying bottomlands, the burdens of salmon preservation have fallen hard on farmers. The stream buffer strips can significantly reduce usable pastureland and must be managed to avoid manure pollution and erosion. As you drive through the valley, you see fast-growing cottonwoods sprout from fields that once supported herds of dairy cows. The county, it seems, must choose between farmers and salmon.

It is trying to have both. A separate effort has aggressively attempted to help farmers prosper. The Farmlink program draws young urbanites to farming, boosted by rapidly growing demand for locally

One of the landmark ideas in planning history is Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Concept. Expounded most fully in a monograph included in the 1926 *Regional Plan for New York City*, many of us in the planning profession have largely internalized its key ideas: that the neighborhood has a compelling scale and the essential DNA building blocks of the contemporary city, and in many respects, is where the experience of living is the most vital and visceral.

I review Perry's idea in the introduction to the planning course I teach each fall at the University of Virginia. In many ways, it makes infinite sense: the emphasis on defining a neighborhood by the schoolshed (the number of homes and families sufficient to populate an elementary school), the mixing of uses and activities, the pedestrian scale, and the attempt to slow and calm the automobile. I would like to propose, however, that we significantly update the neighborhood concept; I believe we should better take into account our growing appreciation of the value and need to reconnect with nature and natural systems, building on the insights of "biophilia," a concept popularized by E. O. Wilson. In *Biophilia*, Wilson defines the term as "the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms," something essential for healthy, happy, productive humans and an essential quality of urban life.

What a biophilic neighborhood looks like remains an important subject for discussion. Some of the elements are clear, however. A biophilic

neighborhood is one where nature is close at hand, where there are trees, gardens, streams and other growing life just outside one's door, which are in turn connected to larger, more expansive networks of green spaces and wildness. Increasingly, we speak of the need for neighborhoods that foster and accommodate *free-range* kids—where, ideally, we create sufficient opportunities for children to play in nature, rather than more conventional playground structures. Pedestrian connections, bicycle infrastructure and urban neighborhoods that allow both children and adults to walk out the front door and move from smaller to progressively larger natural areas encourages physical exercise, place-learning and provides kids with important independence in an American landscape so dependent on parental chauffeuring. My Australian colleague Peter Newman believes we must set the bar even higher, designing cities for *feral* kids.

Biophilic neighborhoods and places will make us more resilient as a society. For me, this is partly a project of redefining the ways in which we understand community wealth. We are apt to think of our community assets in the usual, narrow way (property values, built infrastructure, etc). An expanded understanding of community wealth includes, for example, friendships and social patterns, the abundance of time in a community (time affluence), history and stories, the presence of elders and the young together in the same urban spaces and food heritage.

I am reminded of the day I spent in one of San Diego's remnant and incredibly beautiful canyons, Rose Canyon, with two friends and fellow urban trackers. Over the course of tracking the resident female bobcat, I learned a lot about how the canyon served to bring together different parts of the neighborhood. Those living in biophilic neighborhoods may increasingly need to find creative ways to coexist with other animals. Effective strategies for co-existence are being pioneered in cities like Vancouver, including a program run by the Stanley Park Ecological Society called Co-existing With Coyotes (CWC) which, for example, teaches residents through online instructions how to make noisemakers to keep coyotes at a safe distance.

As our nation continues to age, elders will need to play an increasingly important role in becoming unofficial neighborhood place docents or nature coaches, adding a valuable measure of meaning and pleasure to their lives while imparting an ecological consciousness to the next generation.

We might wonder how practical or realistic it is to imagine urbanites living in closer contact with the natural world, residing in places with the physical conditions and sensibilities of urban biophilia. But the silver lining of the mortgage crisis and economic downturn is that many households and families are profoundly re-thinking their lives and their commitments. A shift is under way in how the home is perceived—from thinking about enhancing the resale of the house to a sense of what might make the house more livable, enjoyable and meaningful. These shifting attitudes suggest the potential for a greater caring about, and interest in, the *urban* natural world, and that is a promising development, indeed.

TIMOTHY BEATLEY is the Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning at the University of Virginia School of Architecture. Beatley is the author of *Resilient Cities*, *Green Urbanism*, *Green Urbanism Down Under* and most recently *Biophilic Cities* (Island Press, 2010).

ABOVE: Urban coyotes: opportunities for wildness and coexistence in cities. Photo: John Harrison

THE CITY LIFE I WANT TO LIVE

Barbara Swift

The words “the good life” frame a spectrum loaded with moral judgment and extremes—a spectrum of only black and white. Thomas Jefferson, with his belief in the morally uplifting qualities of rural life, has given us a deeply embedded tradition of suspicion, disdain and fear of cities and the pestilence of a depraved, pleasure-seeking life that springs fully formed from dense urban living. A city will destroy anything good or moral.

This fear is embedded in our public policy, manifest in the design and use of our streets and public realm and in the rigorous separation of public and private life. This may have been valid two centuries ago, but today the fear of rich, sensuous urban life stifles the maturation and the success of cities—which are extraordinary resources. Densification addresses climate change. Edward Glaeser’s work documents the power of cities as incubators for innovation, creativity and sources of economic power. Both are reason enough to uproot the Jeffersonian view.

Changing embedded cultural frameworks requires long, hard persistent work. Amy Trubeck, the author of *A Taste of Place*, believes shifting the way we live must first be done at a visceral level with a celebration of sensuous experience and then at cerebral, moral, political level. She believes this is required to fundamentally change any pervasive cultural framework and the way we live.

Of course, it is easy to frame the problem, but what are examples of effective action? Such solutions must first start with faith in the individual’s and collective’s strong innate desire for a rich life. Places to begin include:

Food

Make sure food carts, vending stands, cafés and markets populate public space—and abundantly! Nothing like good food draws people, and with food comes gathering, conversation and social urban life. With food comes rich smells, sensuality and ephemeral public experience. With food comes chairs and tables, working lunches, lingering, people watching, musing and the need for generous pedestrian territory. Bring food and the demand for well-designed, humane public space will follow. With food comes a social contract to care and maintain, and social contracts formed around shared return foster interaction and shift the responsibility from a relatively anonymous government to a shared responsibility with individuals with faces—people you see daily. Food is an insidious and wily tool.

BELOW: Shrimp and fish on the corner of Rue de Ecoles and Carmes, Paris.



ABOVE: Saturday arias on Maiden Lane in San Francisco.
PHOTOS: Barbara Swift

If cities are to be places of innovation, attracting the best and the brightest, then they must be interesting and a source of pleasure.

Art Made Public

Every Saturday morning, a rotund balding man in a white shirt stands at the intersection of Maiden Lane and Kearney in San Francisco and with arms wide open, sings arias in Italian. He has found an acoustic sweet spot and has appropriated the street. Art made public, both fixed and ephemeral, is an indicator of a vital and rich city life. The integration of the arts changes the nature of a city, shifting it from a place of work to a place of living and being. The 60 pianos installed in New York City as part of the NYC Business Improvement District Public Art Program *Play Me I Am Yours* inserts a tool for civic interaction and function for the public realm—in addition to walking, you can play a piano, if you want! *Lullaby Moon*, Lucia Nearv’s year long theatrical wonder, and *Nights on the Piers* have become part of Seattle’s urban myth. Traditionally, the value of the arts is defined and justified by economic return (in the form of taxes). If there is an economic downturn, the arts quickly receive financial cuts, public and private. If cities are to be places of innovation, attracting the best and the brightest, then they must be interesting and a source of pleasure. In this equation, the arts bring much more to the table than a small increase in revenue. A healthy, diverse and well-supported arts community is a true indicator – not an add-on and certainly not the stepchild – of a vibrant, healthy city.

In the effort to change deep-seated cultural frameworks, you can’t talk about change, you must act. All of the aforementioned examples, and many others, are actionable by individuals or small groups. Each focuses on life in the city. Each shifts incrementally the experience and the perception of a city’s value. Each applies to cities and towns of all shapes and sizes, for residents first and tourists second. The city I want to live in is not apologetic for its sensuality and rich urban life.

BARBARA SWIFT is the founding member of Swift Company LLC, a landscape architecture and urban design firm in Seattle. She frequently writes and lectures on urban issues.

LONGING FOR THE GOOD LIFE

Timothy Pfeiffer

I was born lucky. With a tarnished silver spoon, a doting grandmother fed me a romanticized heritage of the American Northwest that still shapes who I am today: tales of timber and shipping, the Victorian mansion that housed our civic-minded family, a founding clan of Port Townsend, Washington. Though wildly successful to a point, my people lost everything in the Great Depression—except their resilient pride in family lore, heirloom treasures and the faded glory of “the good life” once enjoyed.

My grandmother found in me an eager sponge for culture. The rich fabric of her storytelling included instruction in the tangible texture and feel of the few treasures still intact. She lectured on ancestral portraits and Eastlake and Queen Anne furniture, and she explained the differences between the Heriz and Serape rugs. She impressed the importance of first-edition books and the marks that differentiate American from English silver.

Her story was about the power of place, of legacy, of how comfort shapes the way people live their lives together—“the intrinsic value of things,” as she liked to put it. My grandmother ignited my creative yearnings and the desire for a specific way of living. Our connection led to my passion for creating environments that aims to articulate and heighten the importance of place in everyday life.

When I grew up, I turned this passion into a profession generating what the corporate world calls “Branded Environments”: brick-and-mortar stores, restaurants and hotels. Properly conceived, these projects bring personal visions of the good life, like the vision my grandmother instilled in me, to light in the world of commerce. Design elevates and illustrates the values and aspirations of a brand in

I started the project by comparing how Starbucks customers experience public space to the way they inhabited these same spaces in the pre-laptop age. Most customers, I found, have come to think of Starbucks as a “third place,” an alternative to the home and office that has elements of both spaces. My design team found that community groups use the stores the way their parents might have used neighborhood church halls. Business people gather for out-of-office, off-site meetings. Moms with strollers come in the mornings. Students come, too. (Today, there’s a student study-hall laptop-lane in nearly every location). Starbucks customers value sustainability, so we elected to have all new stores LEED certified. And since visits to the coffee shop are such an important part of everyday life for so many people, we built bridges between the store designs and their neighborhood settings.

In most Starbucks-sized corporations, commercial design follows the dictates of market analysis. My team took a broader approach. We looked at variations of communal seating, room layouts and furniture proximity in coffee and tea houses in Europe,

Design can bring us closer to our roots, both romanticized and abstract, tangible and concrete.

a physical space while helping individuals to make emotional connections with their own desires and ideals. The tactile comforts and functionality of the spaces I design aim to elicit in the visitor an immediate familiarity.

The desire for community is as important today as it was in the Victorian Age or in the heyday of the Masonic Temples and the Elk’s Clubs. Yet today, in a society thoroughly pervaded by consumerism driven by media-saturated, virtual experiences, people have learned to find a sense of belonging in different kinds of places. In my opinion, the corporations driving this social shift must try to satisfy not only market demands but also human needs for meaning and comfort.

One of my most powerful discoveries of this reality began in 2008, when I was invited to lead the rebranding design efforts for the global portfolio of Starbucks Coffee stores. My goal was to create a Starbucks’ environment that speaks to today’s customer at the local level, while connecting to the brand’s 40-year history as an “American” gathering place.

Africa and Asia. We gathered inspiration for texture, scale and experience. We riffed on study halls, pubs and hotel lobbies—the public space equivalents of living rooms and dens. We respected and highlighted the regional, cultural and architectural components of changing neighborhoods, responding to the needs of new residents. More than five hundred new design elements were introduced into a refurbished design library. By conjuring echoes of the past and making connections with an ever-changing present, our aim was to create distinctive new physical environments that each community could embrace.

Design can bring us closer to our roots, both romanticized and abstract, tangible and concrete. Our aging cities are rich in urban design and an architecture that can inspire community-building in the present. The purpose of thoughtful architecture and interior design is to set the stage for a good life, one that respects history even as it reaches forward, satisfying some desires while stimulating others—and evoking a sense of longing that is, strangely but certainly, its own form of contentment.

TIMOTHY PFEIFFER is a Seattle and New York based designer whose work focuses on curating iconic environments. In 2008–2010 he was Senior Vice President of Global Design for Starbucks Coffee.

MAXIMUM/ MINIMAL LIVING

Ken Tadashi
Oshima

A house, I know, is but a temporary abode, but how delightful it is to find one that has harmonious proportions and a pleasant atmosphere...A house, though it may not be in the current fashion or elaborately decorated will appeal to us by its unassuming beauty—a grove of trees with an indefinably ancient look; a garden where plants, growing of their own accord, have a special charm...and a few personal effects left carelessly lying about [give] the place an air of having been lived in. A house which multitudes of workmen have polished with every care, where strange and rare Chinese and Japanese furnishings are displayed, and even the grasses and trees of the garden have been trained unnaturally, is ugly to look at and most depressing. How could anyone live for long in such a place? The most casual glance will suggest how likely such a house is to turn in a moment to smoke.

Yoshida Kenk, 1282-1350, ESSAYS in Idleness (1330-32)

Today the musings of this medieval monk on the virtues of the minimal dwelling in harmony with the natural environment are surprisingly relevant. His praise of unassuming beauty over elaborate and strange excesses seems to be a direct critique of nouveaux riches. So many of the “super-sized” McMansions, akin to the elaborate houses scorned by Yoshida, have come to be foreclosed properties with the burst of the real estate bubble. Gone is the fashion for the massive SUV Hummer that officially ceased production in May 2010. The economic collapse indeed begs the question: Does bigger really means better? Can one really consume a Starbucks 31-ounce Trenta iced coffee or tea, which is about twice the capacity of an adult bladder? Beyond complex formulas for LEED architectural designs, can basic patterns of living promote sustainable living environments?

Fundamental questions arise about how the size of a dwelling corresponds to human beings. For centuries, the primitive hut has been the ideal of many cultures—from Marc-Antoine Laugier’s four-column structure supporting an entablature to Henry Thoreau’s cabin at Walden Pond to thirteenth century Buddhist abbot Kamo no Chōmei’s “ten-foot square hut” (Hōjōki). In his “An Account of my Hut,” Kamo no Chōmei acknowledged that such a hut “is very small, but it holds a bed where I may lie at night and a seat for me in the day; it lacks nothing as a place for me to dwell. The hermit crab chooses to live in little shells because it well knows the size of its body...” Indeed,

if the hermit crab were to super-size its shell, it could no longer move. The abbot also looked to the bird’s nest and the cocoon spun by an aged silkworm as habitats appropriately sized to the inhabitants. Of course the modern dweller has more belongings than a bird or silkworm, but how much “stuff” is necessary to maintain “the good life”?

In “What We Mean by ‘A Home,’” Architect Kiyoshi Seike likened the home to a suitcase. He argued, “When we take a trip we must carefully consider the clothing we put inside the limited confines of our suitcase. The aim of the trip itself, whether it be a business trip or a sightseeing trip, determines what we include. The same is true of our houses, the clothing, as it were, of the journey of human life...”

Many people, nonetheless, worry about feeling claustrophobic in such minimal dwellings. Indeed, there is a fine line between being cozy or constricted, which is subjective to individuals, cultures and contexts. For Kamo no Chōmei, the hut in the country was brought to life by natural phenomena—including the sounds of a cuckoo the in summer and evening insects in the autumn. For the urban dweller, the minimal dwelling can be seen as relieved by expanding into the living room of the city—whether it is in a café, library or museum. The tiny refrigerator encourages daily shopping to keep items fresh, and the minimal kitchen can be counterpoised by the culinary delights of the city.

In a modern economy driven by consumption, maintaining the ideal of the minimal dwelling is a

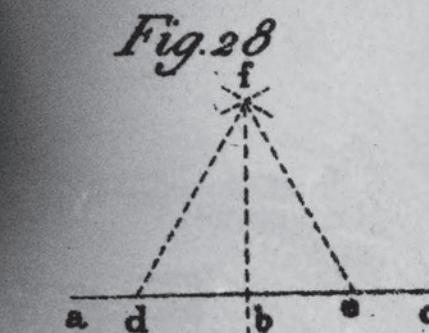


constant challenge. Nonetheless, this can mean striving for basic ideals of *quality over quantity* rather than *bigger is better*. The minimal dwelling, which could be seen as a fundamental resistance unit, modulates human lives within both the natural and urban environment. Perceptions and forms of living environments change over time. Yet they all beg almost primal questions of sustaining living within the cycles of the day, seasons and years whereby a “ten-foot square hut” may indeed more intensely engage human habitation in the present, as well as in the past and future.

KEN TADASHI OSHIMA is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Washington, Seattle. Ken’s publications include *International Architecture in Interwar Japan* (University of Washington Press, 2009) and *Arata Isozaki* (Phaidon, 2009).

PHOTOS: Ken Tadashi Oshima

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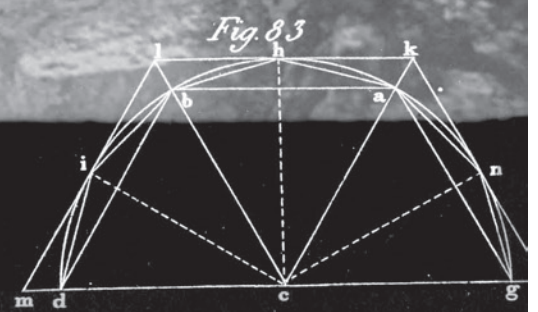


RISKY BUSINESS

Now that the money's all gone and the safety net in tatters, can we afford to overcome the fear of failure and take creative risks? *Maybe we can't afford not to.*

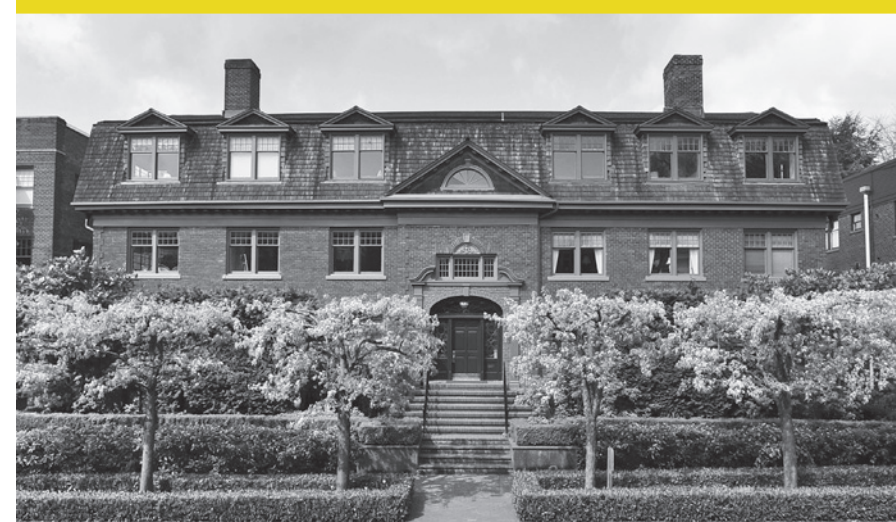
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Summer events

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6/9/11

The Good Life Reconsidered

Spend an evening with feature editor Ray Gastil, Seattle City Council Member Sally Clark, and Alley Cat Acres activist and UW doctoral candidate Amber Banks on how Seattleites are designing a new kind of "good life" for the future. From "guerrilla" to City initiatives, the discussion will balance between education, urban design and planning, policy making and beyond.

When: Thursday, June 9, 2011

Where: Rejuvenation, 2910 1st Ave S

Time: 5:30-7:30

7/19/11 & 8/22/11

Nucor Steel Behind the Scenes Tour

In operation since 1905, Washington's largest recycler, Nucor Seattle melts and manufactures steel products such as rebar, flats, angles, channels and smooth round bar. Nucor Corporation is the largest recycler in the US and employs over 20 thousand employees across the nation. Their number one focus is safety combined with a commitment to being cultural and environmental stewards to their communities.

When: Tuesday, July 19 and August 22, 2011

Where: Nucor Steel - Seattle Plant, 2424 SW Andover St

Time: 6:00-8:00 pm

Tours limited to 10 people

\$10 suggested donation at the door

Light hors d'oeuvres and beverages provided

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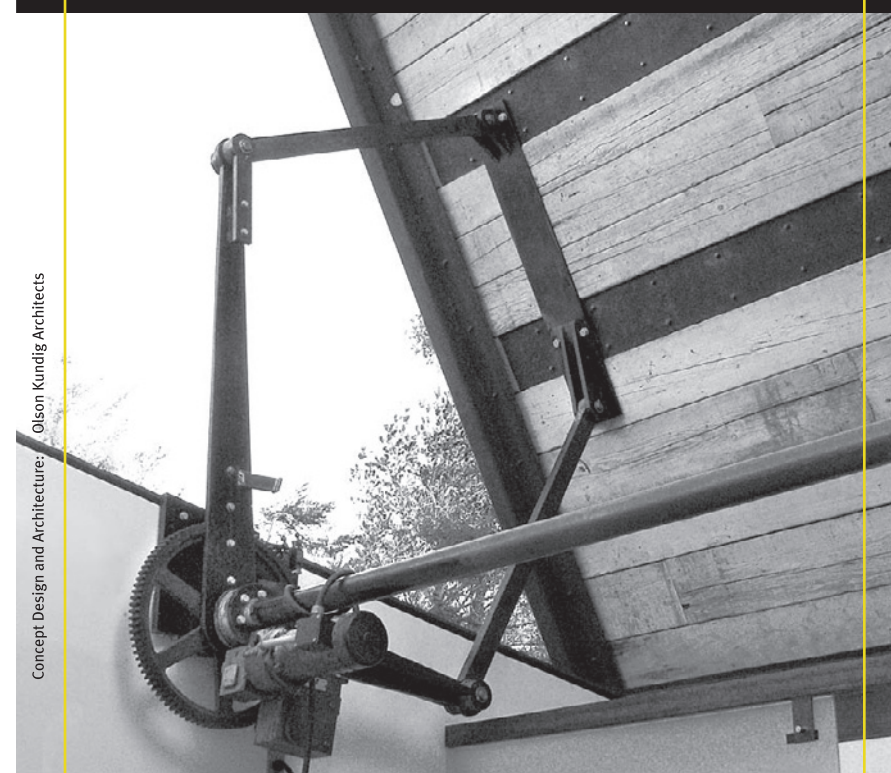
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Maple Syrup, Terroir and Aesthetics

Amy Trubek

Is it possible to say that maple syrup has a particular *terroir*? Yes, if we translate the French concept of terroir to the English phrase “taste of place.” In Vermont, this concept captures what we consider defining elements of our state’s food system: farming communities, strong rural agrarian and culinary traditions, and the belief that it *does* matter where your food comes from. Tying taste to place asserts that food and drink reflect the natural environment and its intersection with human craftsmanship and cultural practices.

This all begins at the intersection of physiological and cultural tastes. Judging the sensory quality of any food or drink is complex. All human beings share certain physiological aspects of taste. However, taste remains profoundly subjective because, perhaps even more so than with senses such as hearing and sight, taste experiences are simultaneously shared and not-shared. The body (or at least the mouth, nose and brain) always mediates between food and drink as an external social object and an internal sensory subject. Once food or drink enters the body, any social engagement becomes the sensation of an individual. Sensing taste also requires talking taste; sharing this particular sensory experience requires translating it to language, a shared dialogue with others.

All human beings share certain physiological aspects of taste. However, taste remains profoundly subjective.



ABOVE: A sugarhouse in Starksboro, Vermont. Photo: Amy Trubek

The complexity of creating an aesthetics of taste, therefore, lies in how discussions develop and what values and beliefs shape both conversations and final sensory evaluations.

Describing the taste of maple syrup is difficult, especially these days, when we are endlessly pursued by sweet flavors found in almost every processed and packaged food. In an interview, long-time sugar maker Francis Howrigan said, “I’d have to stress the maple flavor [has] a lot of body to it. It’s the same as anything. People taste today or eat today, but do they taste? You put the syrup in your mouth and you swallow it. You should have a good, sweet maple taste afterwards.” Sugar makers know that not every batch of maple syrup will taste the same; what else can we expect from a truly wild food? Much of the joy and pain of the sugaring season revolves around just what sort of syrup emerges after the sap has been harvested and then boiled down to a viscous liquid. Every year brings new surprises.

Lighter syrups can taste like vanilla or evoke the smells of maple leaves that have fallen on the forest floor. Meanwhile, the maple flavor of darker syrups, depending (among many possibilities) on the location of a sugarbush or the amount of time the sap takes to boil down into syrup can taste woodier and earthier, with even a hint of mushroom. More than a century ago, the naturalist John Burroughs said, “[maple syrup] has a wild delicacy of flavor that no other sweet can match. What you smell in freshly cut maple-wood, or taste in the blossom of the tree, is in it. It is then, indeed, the distilled essence of the tree.” Soil, tree, slope and weather all make a difference in the taste of maple syrup.

A constant conversation between people about sensory judgments in light of nature’s bounty can reap many rich rewards: new aesthetic values and new relationships to the natural landscape. In Vermont, this conversation now involves sugar makers from around the state, researchers at the University of Vermont, policymakers from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture and others. We keep smelling, sipping, swallowing and talking, always learning more about the unique tastes of Vermont’s working landscape.

AMY TRUBEK is an assistant professor in the Nutrition and Food Science Department at the University of Vermont. She is involved in ongoing research into the importance of the taste of place as a means of promoting and supporting place-based foods and regional food systems. Her recent book, *The Taste of Place, A Cultural Journey into Terroir*, looks at the long-term importance of terroir as a cultural category in France and explores how it is being used in the United States today to change our food culture.

HybridCity

A RETROACTIVE MANIFESTO
FOR VANCOUVER

Trevor Boddy

Vancouver thrives when it embraces its many origins, peoples, ideas and forms. Vancouver falters when it strives for purity, isolation, unity of function. We are a city of hybrids so integrated they slide into each other as HybridCity. Our metropolitan strength, the power of our urban engine, is creative diversity—without it, we become brittle, uncaring and dull

INVENTING HYBRIDCITY

This city was invented at the stroke of a pen. In utterly no sense did Vancouver evolve organically – as in standard urban narratives, be they of Etruscan Rome or Homer Simpson’s Springfield – but rather, the city was conceived in a single business and political contract for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Vancouver was born and raised in a real estate deal transferring a public good to private developers, and this precedent, this fusion of cash with building deeds, has shaped us ever since.

Vancouver has also always been Métis in spirit, a melding of First Nations visual/material cultures with those of Asia and Europe. The railway was built with Chinese labour, and Vancouver’s population has been one-fifth or more Asian from the get-go, making our diets, business culture, architecture and global outlook permanently Eurasian. *For our HybridCity, I proclaim the Pentecostal Potlatch and that we celebrate Equinox, Eid and Easter with bubble tea!*

FORGETTING AND DENYING HYBRIDCITY

For Granville’s sawmills, then Vancouver’s houses and avenues, the Salish were perched in perimeters—what is later known as Stanley Park, Kitsilano and the Southlands. Vancouver will never be at peace until it reconciles with its indigeneity, a cornerstone of HybridCity. Vancouver must also confront its history of apartheid. Early “racial zoning” mandated Asians’ residences and businesses be located in Chinatown’s few blocks and nowhere else. This was followed by “chemical zoning”; through much of the 20th century, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) was the only neighbourhood where the City granted bar and tavern licenses. Finally, in a deadly collusion of the civic left with right, the DTES became the sole locus for social housing and poverty services in the two decades before 2005.

BUILDING HYBRIDCITY

Vancouver now grows never-before-seen hybrids of building forms and types: thin condo high-rises set on townhouse podia (a hybrid of Mid-level Hong Kong with Brooklyn brownstones); towers laminating office with residential with hotel; four condo-skyscrapers erupting up out of a Costco; a village for 400 residents set on the big box roof of a Home Depot, itself set on a Save-On Foods. Our best planning actually builds (not just promises) homes for the poor, the elderly and the creative, all integrated seamlessly with those for the wealthy, the global and the itinerant. Our city-building successes are real and exported happily as “Vancouverism,” a now-global commodity shaped out of our collective fantasies of splendid protected views, ever-increasing value and a few cute shrubberies out front.

HYBRIDCITY NOW

Real estate is Vancouver’s civic-religion, and marketers, politicians, developers and planners are the descending ranks of its priestly class. HybridCity at its best is a creation of our realtors, but without public guidance, they are just as likely to destroy it. Real estate is a reality for every city, but few this large are so singularly conceived, named, shaped, improved and governed by this one industry.

Vancouverites need to understand that their HybridCity – as artifact and idea – is the creation of public policy. The DTES is as much a creation of Vancouverism as Yaletown’s glass towers. A DTES solely for the addicted poor is as much a corruption of HybridCity as a downtown given over solely to high-end condos, unleavened by new workplaces and affordable housing. To concentrate bar and cabaret licenses along Granville denies the necessary noise and conflict of HybridCity elsewhere. To ghettoize cultural institutions in an arts precinct denies variety and animation to other districts. To make ours the greenest city will require a lot of greenwashing. *Hybrids can be sterile or they can flourish—the choice is yours.*

TREVOR BODDY is a consulting urbanist and architecture critic/curator; his exhibition *Vancouverism: Architecture Builds the City* has shown in London, Paris and his hometown to date. Despite living in Vancouver, over the past decade he has become ARCADE’s most frequent contributor.

Manifestos have a long and noble place in architectural history but one that has diminished in the era of first the starchitect then the cranky blogger. The text below is a manifesto commissioned from regular ARCADE contributor Trevor Boddy by the Vancouver Art Gallery for its exhibition *WE: Vancouver, 12 Manifestos for the City*, which ran from 15 February to 1 May of 2011. 1,000 copies of the manifesto were letter-pressed and then half of them pasted onto hoardings and power poles around the city, as well as installed on the walls of the gallery. Trevor Boddy welcomes feedback on his retroactive manifesto for his city (trevorboddy@telus.net) and challenges colleagues in Seattle and Portland to shape similar texts for their own cities. —Ed

Thinking Drawing Discovering Knowing

JM Cava

Louis Kahn
*On The Thoughtful Making of Spaces:
The Dominican Motherhouse
and a Modern Culture of Space*
Michael Merrill
Lars Müller Publishers. 2010.

Louis Kahn
*Drawing to Find Out:
The Dominican Motherhouse
and the Patient Search for Architecture*
Michael Merrill
Lars Müller Publishers. 2010.

Drawings are expressions of one's striving to reach the spirit of architecture.
L. Kahn

An architect's repeated tracing and retracing of lines amounts to more than a mere transfer of information, but is in and of itself a way of knowing, a meditative sinking into the plan, a kinesthetic grooving and reviewing of its information: its spaces, its details, the topography which it occupies.
M. Merrill

Eons ago, a friend and I made an architectural tour of the City of Brotherly Love. On our hit list was a pilgrimage to the Louis Kahn archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Unlike the Liberty Bell, the archive turned out to be a rarefied, reservations-only setup and access was firmly denied. Undaunted, we dashed through the door during a momentary distraction and stumbled on some kind of massive organizing effort. Thousands of drawings were scattered in piles on the floor, and we pounced on the stacks of oversized tracing paper covered in smudged black pencil and charcoal like pirates with buried treasure. And, like the Mona Lisa or any icon never seen in the flesh, the drawings' physical reality was at once more powerful and more ordinary than imagined. They had incredible physical beauty but were oddly similar (in form not content) to drawings on so many architects' desks. This was both disturbing and reassuring—here was the handiwork of an honest-to-god genius, yet it was so close to how we all worked: same pencils, same paper, same process, same struggle (though certainly not the same outcome!).

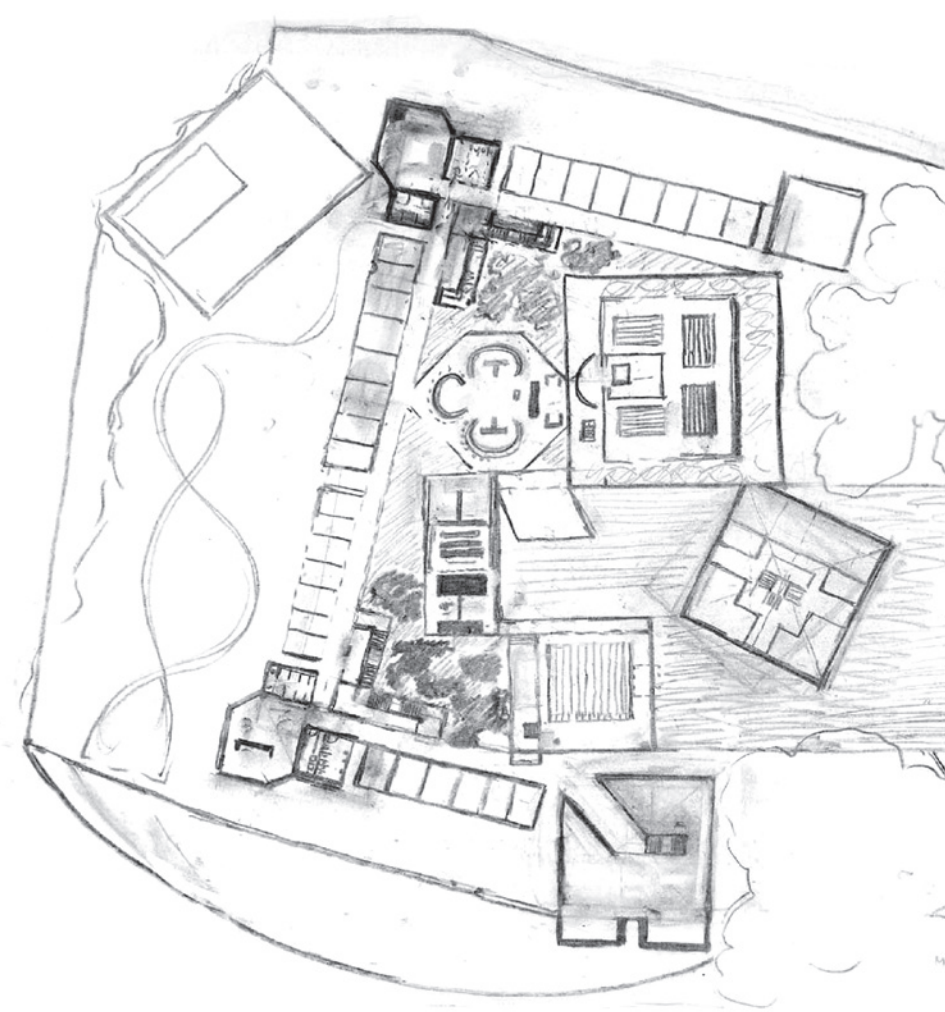
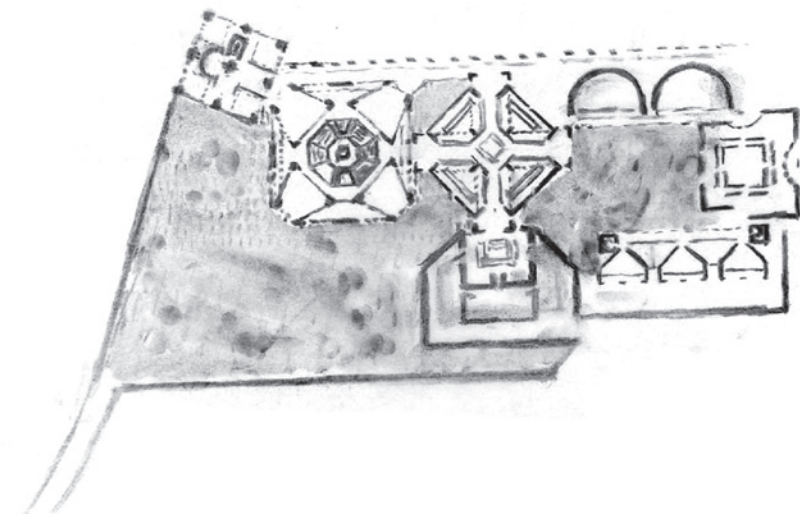
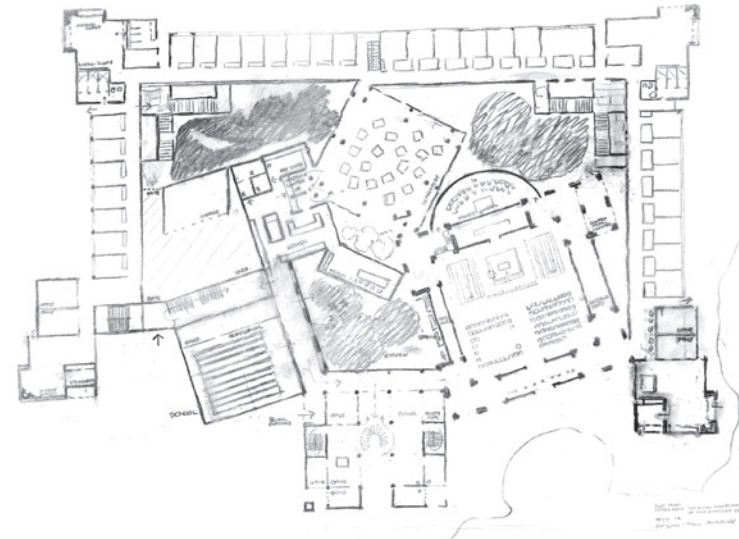
Michael Merrill, a practicing architect, professor and a very good writer, brings this same sense of wonder, joy and discovery to life in a pair of provocative companion books published by Lars Müller. He invites us to view the great complexity that is the universe of Kahn's work through the lens of a single unbuilt project – the Dominican Motherhouse – an unusual and risky approach,

but it works beautifully. We follow the evolution of Kahn's thinking from week to week over a three-year period, accompanied by Merrill's fluid narrative, illuminating design nuances, and opening up of new important lines of inquiry. Of course, one reason for the book's success is that, prominent within the pantheon of great unbuilt buildings (Boullée's Library, Terragni's Danteum, Kahn's Salk Meeting House, anything by Archigram, etc.) stands this project of Kahn's. Pragmatically, the Motherhouse is an integrated ensemble of buildings and landscapes for a congregation of Dominican sisters nestled into a wooded property in rural Pennsylvania. Historically, it represents a singular position both in Kahn's personal exploration of meaning and form and within the larger narrative of modern architecture.

The two books are superb companions – I recommend going ahead and buying both – and credit needs to go Lars Müller for agreeing to the considerable expense of publishing two volumes when one might have seemed sufficient. Each format shows off the strength of its respective content. The intellectual portion is neatly packaged into an appropriately denser paperback, with smaller illustrations illuminating the text. Freed from those constraints, the second book is a luscious visual documentation in large-format hardcover with Kahn's drawings lovingly and richly reproduced on thick, coated paper. This volume also has a concise accompanying commentary meant perhaps for those who

choose to skip the history-theory tome. Like any good pairing, the two books are most rewarding together – it's safe to say the whole is greater than the sum of the parts – but each functions nicely on its own. This arrangement is particularly well-suited to a thoughtful work of architecture/architect, and it could only have been conceived by a practicing architect/teacher who wrestles with the peculiar split nature of architectural theory as an abstract historical "text" that remains inextricably tied to the physical act of making. Merrill calls this his "drawing-board bias" towards theory, an attitude appropriate for students of architecture or anyone who practices more than they theorize. For these drawings are not artistic expressions in and of themselves (though many of today's architects subvert this) but records of seeking, thinking and translating thought into the physical realm. Merrill describes this investigation as a "culture of making" distinct from a purely historical approach, while Kahn himself talked about it as making the "immeasurable measurable" and Le Corbusier laconically called the process "architecturing."

The first half of what I'm calling the intellectual book (the second one is visual) tells the detailed story of the Motherhouse design with many of the accompanying drawings from the large volume (reduced in size), while the second half is a tour through Kahn's overall life-work and the ideas he struggled with while prying open the restrictive canon of mid-century modernism. There are many



books on Kahn, but Merrill's is – for my money – not only one of the most enjoyable and accessible reads but it touches on topics often neglected in the standard Kahn literature. Merrill's style calmly and easily integrates academic sources and quotations into an engaging storyline. In the course of events, he mentions many of Kahn's lesser-known collaborators and influences like Le Ricolais, Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Tyng, Kommendant, Meyers, Van Eyck, McHarg, Kiley and the Smithsons along with the vastly under-cited landscape architect Harriet Pattison. Merrill's in-depth interviews with her appear to be an important primary source investigating the essential role of landscape in Kahn's work over the years. The text also re-emphasizes what many forget—the fact that Kahn's approach was simply not possible without his Beaux-Arts background. Merrill furthermore makes a compelling case for Kahn's work being highly contextual in nature (see also Sarah Goldhagen's *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*) and refreshingly, he's not afraid to point out problems and awkward planning that occurs within certain schemes as the Motherhouse evolves.

The larger volume of drawings provides me with downright visceral pleasure and makes me think that perhaps all architectural theory should be presented in this two-part format. In this volume, Merrill is free to discuss the idea of drawing in architecture, how it's used as a tool of inquiry and how it's changed with the advent of computers. He summarizes:

For many architects born after the Dominican Motherhouse, Kahn's tools and drawing culture may seem to have more in common with those of Palladio than with those of our own digitalized practice. Our new tools have not only affected the conception and production of architecture, have not only restructured our profession's social and value systems, they have also changed our way of seeing.

Part of the delight in this book is that not all of the drawings, Merrill notes, can be called "...masterly"; in fact, much looks rather rough, even naive, with the architects' uncertainty or frustration at times almost palpable."

This combined presentation of Kahn through the eyes of the Motherhouse reveals a depth of architectural thought rarely seen today, particularly in over-published celebrity architects. Such struggles and searches, common to the Kahn office, are seldom engaged. Instead, the focus is on public relations, status and publicity. The only well-known office that comes to mind with what might

be called a Kahn-view of exploration is the Patkau's who have, like Kahn, continuously brought ideas to each and every project they design.

It's with some degree of nostalgia that I imagine some future, adventurous young architect bursting excitedly into the archive of a 21st century master, only to find an empty room with a file cabinet of

These drawings are not artistic expressions in and of themselves but records of seeking, thinking and translating thought into the physical realm.

shiny round metallic CD's. These books are timely in that sense, because for me – still the unrepentant designer with paper and pencil – they represent the potential for a reevaluation of the nature and essence of architectural design and its larger role in the world. These drawings and texts are cause for reflection and, as Heidegger remarked, in the end, "human reflection" is possibly all we really have.

JM CAVA is an architect in Portland, where he teaches, writes, and designs.

IMAGES: Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection / Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania

Tom Dixon.

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Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes

Ron van der Veen

As much as I have always imagined myself as a spontaneous and adventurous guy, the older I get the more set in my ways I am. I've traveled the world, I've run with the bulls, I've been on mountaintops, I have a tattoo and earring for God's sake, but I also haven't changed my breakfast cereal in 15 years. This stagnation can be particularly difficult during a worldwide recession. Like so many of our ARCADE readers, I found myself recently in the throes of a career change, and it affected me more than I anticipated. Since my Side Yard installments are typically semi-autobiographical cathartic excises, I felt I owed it to myself to share this with you.

To start out, I've had a pretty unique architectural career in that I had been a "company man" in my prior firm for close to 23 years—almost half my life! I mean, I still had notes in files that were written on typewriters using carbon paper.

When I began considering a career change, I felt like a divorcee tenuously jumping into the dating scene after decades of marriage. There was this nagging sentiment that this recession was going to make me about as eligible as a hetero male looking for love at a gay summer camp. Who would possibly be interested in me now, at my frumpy age, in this economic wasteland, especially after all the things I've written about others in this column?

It became quickly apparent that "firm courting" norms had changed dramatically and Ron van der Veen, wearing his proverbial leisure suit, was behind the times. Simple questions like what to wear (tie or no tie?), how much to talk, what to order for lunch so things wouldn't stick to my teeth all added to my reticence. During one meeting, I looked down towards my crossed legs noticing in shock that my white athletic tube socks were vividly contrasting with my dark grey slacks and black shoes.

One big personal dilemma for me was how much to promote myself to potential employers. You all know how self-effacing architects can be in Seattle! I wanted to sound like a team player, a collaborator, but felt that I needed to say things to make firms want me. It had been so long since

I actually had to impress a boss or colleague that I wasn't quite sure I remembered the art of understated verbal swank.

The same was true for my resume. When you're my age, you can really fill pages up with "stuff." I've also been around long enough to know that lots of architects claim lots of projects in their dubious credentials. (I even interviewed a person once who claimed he designed a project for which I had been the lead designer. That was satisfyingly awkward.) So I debated with myself: If half of what most people write in their resumes are exaggerations and/or falsehoods and my resume is half the length of an average one because I am being honest, if a potential architecture firm isn't aware of this (because of my modesty), will it effectively reduce the value of my resume by 75 percent?

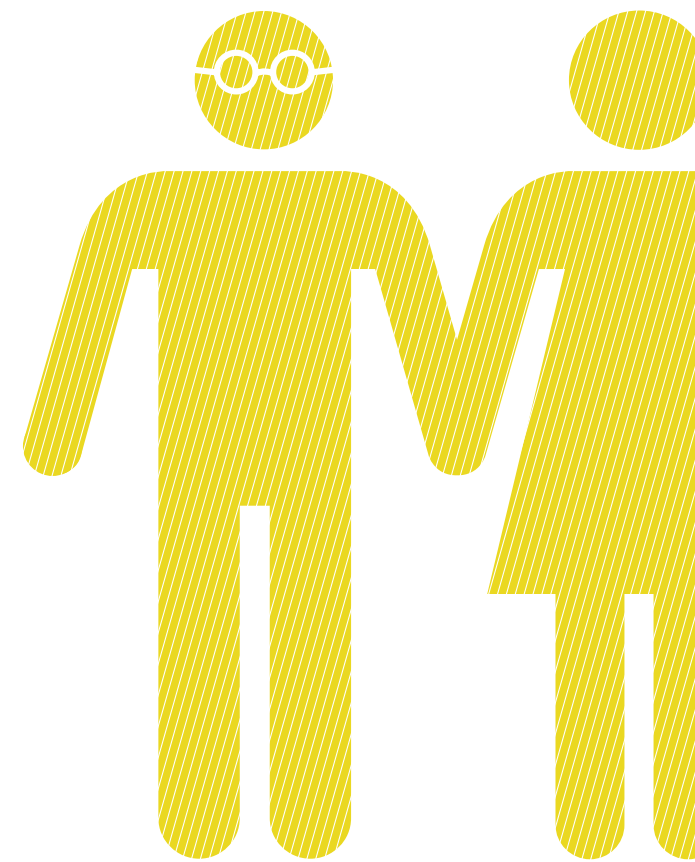
Thank God that most firms don't expect an architect my age to have a fancy, super-graphic portfolio. This was the part on which I actually spent the least amount of effort. But the last time I actually carried around a portfolio, it was in a big, heavy binder. This time I had to keep checking my pockets every five minutes to make sure my flash drive hadn't fallen out.

During my early firm courting, I was riddled with doubt about myself and about leaving my previous employer. I had reoccurring nightmares that I crawled back to my old firm, asking for my job back with most of my colleagues not remembering my name. I never really got over the bad dreams and the "dating for the first time in decades" feeling, but I did learn to wear black socks and order food that wouldn't compromise my teeth.

Eventually things worked out better than expected. After quickly acclimating to the modern courting scene, I am happy to say that I was very

lucky to find a great new girlfriend! And yes, having a new career has been exhilarating—kind of like a prom date with a cheerleader. But it has become apparent to me that the courtship doesn't end when one walks through the door. The toughest part of this transition has been pretending to be competent and concentrating for long stretches of time. It's exhausting! And I figure it is only a matter of time before my new girlfriend realizes my gazing out the window isn't as much about architectural reflection as it is trying to figure out what to write for my next Side Yard installment.

RON VAN DER VEEN is the new principal at DLR Group, but don't call and bug him. He is still concentrating on creating impressive work habits. You can reach him secretly at rvanderveen@dlrgroup.com.



I felt like a divorcee tenuously jumping into the dating scene after decades of marriage. Who would possibly be interested in me now, at my frumpy age, in this economic wasteland, especially after all the things I've written about others in this column?



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RECLAIMED

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Reclaimed is an exhibition of post-1970s works from SAM's collection that probes how contemporary American artists, many from the Northwest, find inspiration in and question our relationship to the natural world. Paintings, sculptures, ceramics, drawings and photographs reveal artists looking to the landscape for both image and material, and offer a response to more traditional works from the 19th and early 20th centuries on view in a complementary exhibition *Beauty and Bounty: American Art in an Age of Exploration*.

This exhibition is organized by the Seattle Art Museum.
Lyle, *North Puyallup*, (detail), ca. 1986, Glenn Rudolph, American, born 1946, gelatin silver photograph, 24 in. x 32 in., on loan from the artist, T2011.132.2, © Glenn Rudolph.

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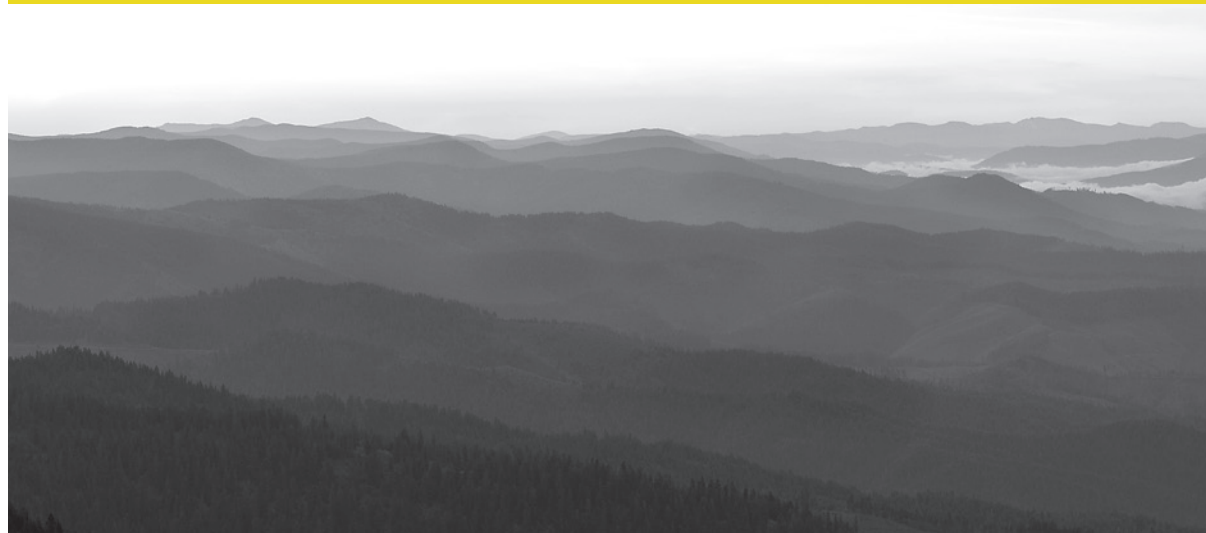
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Kurt Lavenson

In Praise of Fallow Fields

The economic downturn has hit my architecture business rather hard. For years, decades actually, I had a running list of clients waiting for me to design their projects. Now the backlog is gone. I have large blocks of unscheduled time. I live and work only in the present tense, unsure of the outlook next year or even two quarters ahead. This can be awkward to discuss with friends and colleagues. I see pained looks flicker across their faces when I answer the ubiquitous “so how’s business?” with an unequivocal “really slow.” Apparently, I have offered more than they really wanted to hear, violating an unspoken rule by giving voice to loss. Occasionally, I go further, adding, “...and I like it.” Perhaps I am expected to say business is OK, or at the very least picking up again; it is apparently safe to talk about loss in the past tense but not the present. Some colleagues are relieved to discuss loss in the open, taking comfort that they are not alone, but most react as if loss may be contagious and pull away. For my part, I am learning to embrace the slow-down for its cathartic qualities. The stillness has within it another kind of wealth—one of reflection, grounding and opportunity. I have come to appreciate the fallow period.

Until the modern era of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, it was common practice for farmers to let alternating sections of their fields go fallow to regenerate. This gave the soil and organisms a chance to rebuild the land’s nutrient base for subsequent crops. However, as emphasis shifted toward maximum production, the soil was never allowed to rest. Nutrient flows were subsidized and accelerated by artificial means, leading to depletion and pollution. I see a metaphor here for the construction industry and the economy as a whole. The boom cycles are not sustainable without artificial subsidies, and they become unhealthy when pushed past their natural limits. An economy which primarily measures success in terms of speed and quantity of production will eventually become toxic. It is time to take another look at the elegance of processes that appear inefficient, like those fields

left unplanted and uncultivated for a season. When we think with a longer-term perspective, not doing can be as valuable as doing. There is regenerative opportunity in stillness.

Recently, I spoke with Sim Van der Ryn, architect, author and leading proponent of sustainability and whole systems thinking before most

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of us knew the words. I asked him to discuss the fallow field metaphor. After hours of conversation, I had only one word circled on my notepad—presence. We always came back to presence. If ambitious, hyper-multitasking is a skill of the head, then mindful presence is a skill of the heart. Valuable knowledge and insight reside in the heart, where they are often ignored in the rush to success or the panic of crisis. Taking time to pause, to lay fallow,

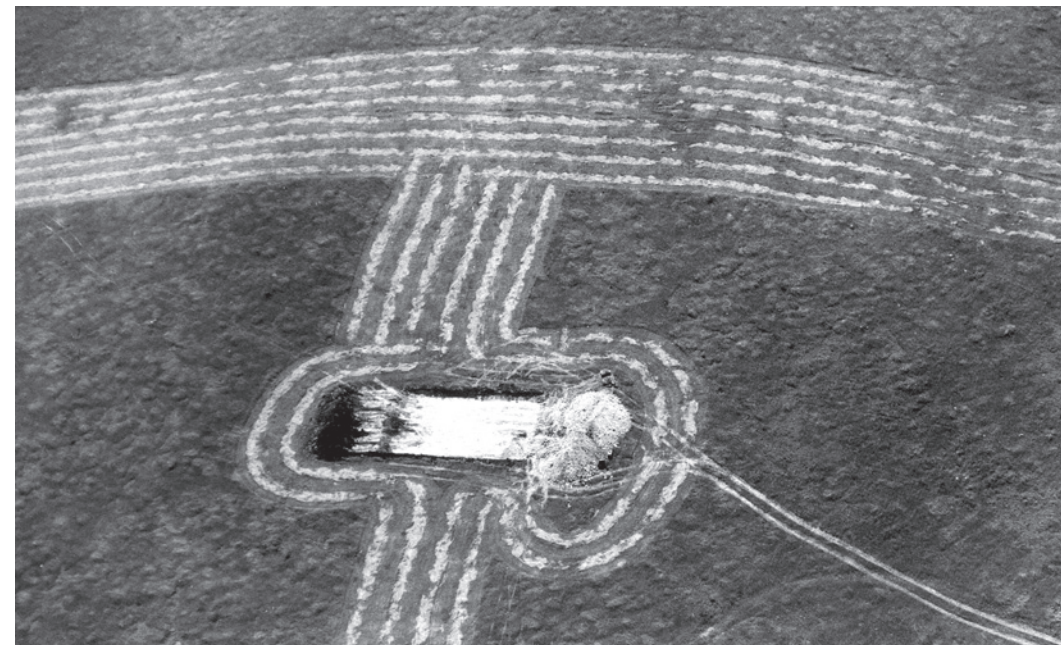


PHOTO: Kurt Lavenson

fallow [fal-oh]

1. (of land) plowed and left unseeded for a season or more; uncultivated.
2. not in use; inactive.

From www.dictionary.com

Let Everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.

Rainer Maria Rilke

allows us to connect with that wisdom and reach a fundamentally new kind of productivity.

Endings are required before we can have new beginnings. Frank Gehry has been quoted describing a period in 1978 when, at the age of 49, his work came to a halt. During a conversation with his biggest client, he admitted to not really liking the projects he was designing. The two parted ways amicably, and the work was suddenly gone. A few days later, Gehry had to cut his staff of fifty down to three. He called the experience “seeing the devil” and said it was neither the first nor the last time it happened. However, that moment was a turning point at which he committed his attention to design work that aroused his passion. He is now one of the most notable and celebrated architects in the world, having fundamentally redefined building form and process. Gehry acknowledged his sense of loss and disappointment. He spoke from the heart. He stopped what he was doing, took the hit and remained present. Then he became available to use his gifts in new and more meaningful ways.

Many now claim their design practices to be focused on sustainability. I’m not convinced, however, that specifying bamboo floors and solar arrays is enough to deserve that moniker if the underlying business paradigm requires constant production. Perhaps design itself would be more sustainable if it allowed, or celebrated, pauses in the economic cycle. They are natural inflection points. For some the consequences of a slowdown are more dismal than others. However, the need to become less afraid of stillness and loss is universal. How many of us have said that we learned more from a test we failed or a job we lost than from an easy victory? Clearly, we don’t need to seek sadness or emptiness; we just need to stop pretending they can, or should, be eliminated. The cusp of profound change is similar to the demolition phase in a construction project. Before building something new, it is necessary to destroy old structures that are interfering—to clear the ground. We have to accept loss, and sometimes destruction, in order to grow. Releasing the past and its hold on us allows for new opportunities.

KURT LAVENSON, AIA, is principal of Lavenson Design, in Oakland, California. He operates a solo architecture practice and may be reached at kurt@lavensondesign.com.

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